جامعة مؤتة
كلية الدراسات العليا

**The Role of Ethnic and Religious Minorities in the Political Transformations in the Russian Federation
2000-2017**

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Mutah University, 2018**

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**This dissertation was presented to fulfill the requirements for a Ph.D. in Political Science / Section of Political Science
Mutah University, 2018**

I dedicate this study to the soul of my father Mohamad Ali Naib Kasht.
May his soul rest in peace.

Acknowledgment

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to my professor his Excellency Ehmoud Ali Abu Salim for his support during supervising my thesis. I would also like to thank the members of the thesis committee; Prof. Fayez Zuraikat, Prof. Saddah Al-Habashneh, and Prof. Walid Al-Oweimer.
With many thanks to the section of Political Science at Mutah University namely Prof. Radwan Al-Majali , head of the section.

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فهرس المحتويات

الموضوع	الصفحة

Abstract

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This study aims at investigating the role of ethnic and religious minorities as effective and specific factors in the political transformations in the Russian Federation. The period of which the study tackles starts after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The study will analyze the current internal political structure of the Russian Federation.

This study focuses on emergency changes in the Russian political system. It also focuses on the main political changes that occurred in Russia since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Moreover, it aims at observing and recording the role of minorities, either religious or ethnic, in the formation the Russian Federation and their future role in the establishment of the current system.

This study was based on the System Approach and the Descriptive Analysis Approach. On the theoretical level, the study was based on the theory of System Analysis (David Easton) and the Theory of Elites to analyze the role of ethnic and religious minorities in the political transformations in the Russian Federation between 2000 and 2017.

Based on the collected data and the current conditions that the study focused on the ethnic and religious minorities played an essential role in the political transformations that occurred in the Russian Federation, and they are still expected to have increased effective roles in the future.

Keywords:

Russian Federation, ethnic and religious minorities, the future role of the ethnic and religious minorities in the Russian Federation, the dissociation of the Soviet Union, Russian Political life.

Chapter one
Background and significance.

Introduction

The fundamental changes after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 captured the attention around the whole world.
The political systems of many countries, particularly those that were members of the Soviet Union, experienced new transformations. New concepts had appeared including human rights and liberties, and new ruling patterns were developing especially in Eastern Europe, the surrounding barrier of the former Soviet Union. Modern Russia was not isolated from these structural transforms, the new leaders fell into a transitional perplexity between the urging need to carefully handle the negative legacy inherited from the Soviet Union, and the urge to keep up with the structural transforms in governing regimes that started to formulate in the civilized communities after the era of socialism.

1.1 Study Background

Each state has its transforms and progress. However, the political transform is rather conspicuous through the collapse and rise of states. The borders of states may remain constant with the support of international law at a certain historical moment, though, these borders may expand or contract over time creating new countries and diminishing others.
In the case of stable borders, there is still a chance that political systems, or perhaps the central institutions that link rulers with the public, can transform. In former socialist states, all political systems performed fundamental changes in the lifestyle of its citizens. Others witnessed changes in their geographical borders. In contrast to the political transforms, economical ones may occur without triggering any other critical transforms in the state. The situation within the Russian community differs completely from any other community that passed through gradual transforms during different eras. (Khushaib 11:2015)
Russia is considered one of the most diverse countries in terms of minorities. With around two hundred minorities, Russian Slavs create the largest ethnic component extending their presence from upmost Siberian north until the Caucasus with a percentage of almost 50% of the total population. Tatars, the second-largest ethnicity, are centralized within the Republic of Tatarstan. Bashkirs come as the third-highest ethnic population within the federation. (Farah 91: 2017)
Despite the religious diversity within the Russian Federation, the government only recognizes four religions: Christianity (Orthodox), Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism. According to statistics, Islam is the second-largest religion in the Russian Federation after the Christian Orthodox which entitled Russia to join the Islamic Conference Organization as an observer state. (Murtadha, 57: 2017)
Many have tried, during the Soviet era, to take advantage of the multitude of ethnicities and nationalities to weaken the great state. Despite that minority multitude was among important factors leading to the collapse of the Soviet Union, its effect was not manifested by a direct clash between different

minorities, it was rather due to the lack of ability by the totalitarian Soviet system to deal with cultural and national diversity in a fair and balanced manner.
Accordingly, tracking the path of democratic transformation in Russia provokes the query on the capacity of minorities, especially Muslims, to develop a certain approach or policy that will enable them to achieve their interests within the political system in the Russian Federation. This process will have to consider the capacity of the new Russian system to contain this ethnic and religious multiplicity in the "post-soviet" Russia.
This study focuses on the issue related to the emergency changes in the Russian political life on the local level, aiming to track the most prominent changes since the year 2000, and seeking to observe and monitor the current and future role of minorities, both ethnic and religious, within the Russian governing regime.

1.2 Objectives of the study

This study aims to:

1. Focus on the role of minorities within the Russian political system by recognizing their reality, components, and level of influence.
2. Foresee the future role of minorities. Being the largest religious minority in the Russian community, Muslims will be taken as a study model.
3. Explore the possibility for minorities, Muslims as a model, to succeed in establishing a front or a party that can represent their interests and guarantee an effective participation in Russian political life.
4. Review the development of the Russian political system since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 until the presidency of Vladimir Putin in 2000.
5. Identifying the internal environment and institutional structure of the Russian political system, and the nature of powers influencing them.
6. Addressing the importance of democratic transformation in the Russian Federation.
7. Stating the roles that the political leadership can perform in building the state at the political, economic, social, and military levels.

1.3 The rationale

This study has both scientific (theoretical) and practical significance. The theoretical significance lies in addressing the most prominent political transformation that took place in the Russian Federation regime after the elapse of the presidential period of the former president Boris Yeltsin in 1999, and the assumption of power by Vladimir Putin in 2000. By addressing these transformations, it is possible to demonstrate the important role of the political leadership in building the state and protecting it from collapse or failure. The role of ethnic and religious minorities becomes clearer in a weakened state

and during transformation between political systems.

As for the practical significance, it stems from knowing the actual role of the Russian political leadership and the factors that led to its success in carrying out this role, which enabled it to achieve sharp and influential transformations in the state. It is conceivable to compare results from the Russian situation to many cases, that we find similar- the Arab spring in the Arab region (Egypt and Tunisia). Those cases resulted in creating a political vacuum that lead to the arrival of new forces of power. Particularly, it is possible to compare the roles of these powers to the role of the Russian ruling elite. It is also important to highlight the ability of minorities to benefit from the political transformations in the state to gain retributions and participate more effectively in the political life in a way that ensures fulfilling their national interests within the framework of the federal state.

While pursuing the Russian case, it is obvious that president Vladimir Putin had received a fragile central authority, a contradictive foreign policy, and a collapsing economy which located Russia at a crossroad; either to advance or to continue collapsing. However, the changes in the Russian political system during the Putin's era resulted in major economic development and political stability, both capacitated Russia with the ability to promote internal conditions and strengthen the role of Russia in the international arena. Again, the problem of ethnic diversity in the Russian Federation reappears. The biggest ethnic challenges were the separation attempts by several republics, wherein Chechnya's separation attempt escalated into an armed conflict. Eventually, Russian political system demonstrated its ability to return from far and retain its unified state.

1.4 Methodology

This study adopted the "System Approach" methodology, one of the most popular methodologies in studying political systems in specific and studying political actions as a whole. This approach was gradually developed and admitted into the field of political science by the American political scientist "David Easton". Later, Easton was followed by other scientists like "Carl Deutsch", "Gabriel Almond", and "Michael Brecher". (Butmor, 130: 1978)

When studying the political process the (system) which is a model of inputs and outputs, represents the basic analytical unit in the "System Approach". In general, the (system) is described as a group of interactive elements that are functionally bound together in an organized manner, dictating that any change in one of the elements will influence the rest of them. Accordingly, the system could be one in itself, or a subsystem in the framework of a higher system. (Al-Khazraji 55:2004). In studying the Russian case, this methodology deals with a political system that consists of multiple connected and interacting parts that affect each other. Therefore, studying the political action in the Russian state in light of this methodology enables determining the main factors affecting the political transformations during the aforementioned period by determining the inputs and outputs of the political process.

The study also adopted the Descriptive Analysis method. This method is adopted in the scientific, literature, psychological and medical fields. The descriptive Analysis method is based on studying one phenomenon in reality, regardless of its classification, and accurately describing this phenomenon while avoiding any exaggeration or understatement by building its definition, then listing its reasons, characteristics, results and implications both quantitatively and qualitatively. After that the method determines the effect of the phenomena on individuals, and the extent of which it relates to other phenomena. The main objective of the descriptive analysis is to understand the present and direct the future. Using descriptive analysis includes, in many incidents, the process of prediction of the phenomena's future and events under study, therefore it will be the proper tool in studying the objectives of the Russian case and respond to the scientific problem. It will enable the study to tackle the prominent phenomenon in the political transformations within the Russian state including the role of the leadership and the effect of minorities and multiple ethnicities in the transformations in the Russian federation.

1.5 The Scientific problem

The study tackles multidimensional problems; the role of ethnic and religious minorities in the past, present, and future, in addition to comparing two different eras for the same state. The study focuses on two different leaderships, of which the first (Yeltsin's era) had created the second (Putin's era). The first leadership was completely unsuccessful while the second was prosperous and managed to respond to the demands and the challenges implied by ethnic and religious minorities, by alluring some and confronting the others that possess separatist characters. The scientific problem of this study tackles a new dimension by exploring the nature of political transformation that took place under the utter mono partisan rule, headed by the current president Vladimir Putin since 2000, and whether the ethnic and religious minorities had maintained their assets gained directly during the early phases of the political transformation in light of the retreat towards a semi- cantered control of power by the "United Russia" party and if these minorities can play an effective role under the current political system.

1.6 Questions of the study

The following questions explain the objectives of this study:

1. What is the role of ethnic and religious minorities in the political transformations in the Russian Federation?

This question includes the following sub-questions:

a. Will the structure of the political system in Russia allow wide and effective participation of minorities?
b. Is there a possibility to establish a political alliance between different minorities that could result in the establishment of a political party that seeks ostensibly to participate in the political life and represents nationalistic and religious orientations in its

core?
    c. What is the effect of ethnical and religious diversity on political stability in Russia?
2. How did the new political leadership, headed by Putin, reconstruct the state?
    a. What are the attributes of the leadership, during Putin's era, that enabled it to re-construct the Russian state which was on the edge of collapse during Yeltsin's era?
    b. What are the boundaries of the oligarchy roles in the political transformation in the Russian Federation?

1.7 The framework of the study:

The time framework:
The study focuses on the period from the year 2000 until 2017 when the features of the new political system in the Russian Federation started to appear. It followed the transition period of the Soviet era and the end of president Yeltsin's period.
Location framework: The Russian Federation.

1.8 The theoretical framework of the study:

The study is based on the Political System Analysis theory by David Easton. Easton presented a theoretical model where the political activity is perceived as a group of interacting and overlapping forces. The reaction between the system units takes place flexibly. This model is based on two phases:
Phase one: In this phase, Easton pictured the political life as a holistic structure of two major forces; the political system and its medium (social context). Easton then presented an understanding of the values process, which he used to explain two things: the dynamics of the political life, and its continuous movement between endless reacting processes. In this phase a group of activities in the form of inputs and outputs within the political system apply the rule of action and reaction.
Phase two: the mechanism of political decision making, provided that the decision is not taken forcibly by the political system, and that unofficial powers participate in the decision making process. (Anderson 134: 1999).
The study according to the Easton model will answer the questions related to the political system in the Russian Federation and its environment (social context), and facilitate the research process to find a framework that sets its directions in line with the steps of scientific research.
The political phenomenon can be defined as a set of interrelationships and interacting elements, consisting mainly of a system and its environment. The political system is built based on inputs and outputs, Easton sees that the inputs consist of two elements: demands and civic needs (Civil society, public opinion polls, media), which must be expressed in the form of rational political manifestations, organization and support to the political system, and faith in the rules of the political game. As for the outputs, they are defined as the reactions between political institutions which control the demands and claims

made by the public through a feedback process that can either have positive or negative outcomes. The feedback is positive when the political system takes positive political measures, which are to accept and fulfil the demands of the surrounding, and then translate them into the form of public policies. On the other hand, the reaction is considered negative when it responds to the demands of the surrounding by rejection and oppressive measures, therefore the political system, by taking positive measures, as confirmed by "Easton", achieves a balance that gives it essence nature of democracy, but if the demands of the surrounding are rejected, the political system is unbalanced, and therefore undemocratic (Noiri, 2009: 11).

David Easton presented a framework for the analysis of the political system in which he sees an integrated circle of a dynamic nature that begins with inputs and ends with outputs while the reverse feedback process links the inputs as follows:

1. The conversion process: It is intended to accommodate the demands in the structures of the legislative and executive system, demands to undergo a lengthy process of conversion inside the structure of the system before they appear in the form of outputs.
2. Outputs: Policies and decisions that relate to values and represent the system's response to actual and expected demands. These outputs may be positive, especially when the demands are represented, however, they may be mere symbolic ones represented by military promises, offers, triggering fear of an external threat or internal division. Outputs may be negative when the authority chooses public terrorism and coercion - to ensure the integrity of the political system.
3. Reversible feedback: which indicates the flow of information from the environment to the political system regarding its actions. It includes the total positive and negative actions stemming from the surrounding politics. These politics formulate the response to the system's actions, so when the system translates its decisions into tangible results, these results will create different effects in the external surrounding. Based on its effect, the surrounding responds in a way that the giving and receiving process continues. The significance of this process is that it is essential for sustaining the system, for being aware of what happened and what will happen regarding the inputs. The political power becomes able to respond by continuing its action, amending, or aborting it. The effective reversible feedback that has a maximum accuracy and a minimum delay guarantees an effective response, wherein its absence, the political system's sustainability is jeopardized. (Al-Khazraji, 2004:58)

Easton sees that the internal social environment includes several effects on the political system represented in:

First: Social layouts, which are economic, cultural, ecological, biological, and personal. The social layouts are comprehensive; all of which react with each other in the community bounded by a framework of a cultural unity. The ecological layout is the socio-geography that forms the relationship between

the population and its natural surroundings, including the geography, resources, climate, and different reactions, patterns, and social styles that evolve from this surrounding.

Second: Biological layout, which reflects the inherent traits that help in identifying the human motives in both the social and political sides, the personal layout expresses the individual's role as a part of the political layout, it perceives the individual through participating in political life as a citizen or a ruler (Al Aswad 204: 1991).

In brief, the system analysis theory deals with the political phenomena as a group of relationships and interacting elements, and by reflecting this theory on the Russian political system, it is obvious that the relationships and elements within include most importantly the role of ethnic and religious minorities. The reversible feedback of the system enables a better understanding of it, especially in light of its interaction with the minorities. This will give a clear image of the political transformations that the ruling system in the Russian federation faced during the shift from communism to its current shape in light of the role of ethical and religious minorities.

The study will also use the elite theory; one of the transitional theories between classical and behavioral. However, this theory maintained its vitality and ability for analysis through the behavioral period, and even after. It is characterized by an accurate selection of the inputs aiming to understand and analyze the political systems.

Like class analysis and group's theory, the elite theory starts by assuming that the political phenomenon cannot be understood in a separate manner. It is rather analyzed within the context of previous phenomena. The political system is a variable dependent on the social system.

In the social horizontal classification, the elite system focuses the power within a minor group and prevents its spread. Diversity is another approach that opposes the elite theory. In elite theory, the power among the society is centered in one group. Diversity however believes in the distribution and spreading of power, even if unequal, it is expected to bestow every person among the society a level of influence on the political system (Aref 1972:23).

In elite theory, this group of unique people controls the power due to their scientific, intellectual, and mental qualifications, or due to their great sacrifice for the benefit of the nation and the country. The group could also be the class of the community that owns strength, influence, power, and decision making at the higher institutional levels. The elite group is characterized by awareness, collusion, and coherence, therefore it controls power not only in its own fields but also in the public issues. (Shahshi 26: 2012).

Political elites vary in their effects based on power and influence. The central elite, which is the most powerful and therefore the most effective, includes members from the state's main figures in legislative, executive, and judiciary powers. (Saad, 20:1989).

The theory of Gaetano Mosca (1858-1941) in elite groups is one of the most prominent theories in explaining the political movement of power and elite administration of the community. In his famous book "The Ruling Class" Mosca defines the elite as the relatively organized minority that governs the

unorganized majority due to its superior organizational capacity supported by its cultural heritage. This elite enjoys political and economic privileges that qualify it to assume a high status within the society".
It is obvious that Mosca focuses on the organizational power of the elites. He sees that the main distinction between the ruling class and the public is the power of organizing, the motive, and the clear goals that the elite class seeks to accomplish (Watfa, 25: 2015).
Through his trials to study the reality of operations and political systems, Mosca concluded that power is the reason behind the evolve of states and political systems. Power is the main engine for any building process of any state system. He believes that within any evenly structured society which has some sort of government, the ruling class is always a minority and from under them is a big class of subjected individuals called the governed class (Saad , 154:1989).

The elite theory is applied in the Russian case because of the active and influential role played by a group of senior statesmen in the executive, legislative, and judicial bodies as mentioned previously. Therefore, within the Russian political system, leadership has the biggest role in the formulation and making of decisions and policies of the Russian state.

The significance of the political elite's influence cannot be disregarded. In the Russian context, these elites comprise of national leaders of the ethnic and religious minorities who either ally with the political leadership of the state to maintain their interests or differ with it. The example of Chechnya illustrates the impact of elites on the political transformation witnessed by the Russian state during its transition from the communist stage into the current one.
The theoretical framework of this study includes the following concepts:

1. Political leadership: There is no agreed definition for the concept. Different researchers usually divide this concept into two levels: The analytical level, and the practical one. Leadership, based on the analytical level is perceived as a multi-element phenomenon that includes interaction between the leader and the political group. On the practical level, the leader is perceived as an individual who is also the most significant element and the easiest one to be monitored in terms of their characteristics and influence. (Hussein 77:2015)
2. Democratic transformation: This is the transition between an authoritarian regime to a democratic one. It is transferring into a system that accepts political pluralism and is also considered to be the processes and interactions which take place during the transformation process. (Hilal, 2005:48)
3. Reestablishing the state: This is empowering the existing institutions and building new efficient ones that can be sustainable and self-sufficient. It is the institutional and administrative capacity of the state to develop and implement policies, laws, and regulations that make it powerful. (Hussien, 2015:143)
4. Minorities: Are a distinct group of people with attributes and characteristics that differ from their counterparts in the main community. Each minority has its own national, ethnic, or religious attributes that are

shared between its members. Minorities differ among themselves in terms of type, identity, and affiliation and can be described as community, class, sect, or band or any term that can refer to the origin or identity of the minority. Other types of minorities may refer to a person's race, religion, language, sect, tribe, region, culture, political views, economics, sociality, nationality. Overall, the ethnic and religious minorities are the most common types in the world and are responsible for most of the minority related conflicts on the global level. (Ali and Hanna, 2005:15)

1.9 Previous studies

Several studies focused on the political transformation in the Russian Federation, the most significant are :

1. Khushaib, Jalal, (2015) The Horizons of Democratic Transition in the Russian Federation, a Critical Study of the Structure and Challenges) Beirut, Arab Center for Research and Political Studies. Based on the theoretical framework and inductive reasoning, the researcher tackled the capacity of the Russian elites to adapt to the political inputs, deal with its implications and develop a governance model that is compatible with the Russian mentality on one side and the needs to establish a strong state on the other, without any jeopardy of the Russian culture or any breaches in the modern democratic practices. The requirements of a democratic transition dictate more than a new political system that emulates human political thought, it has to blow a spirit into this system. The study highlighted the features of Russian democracy and the roles practiced by the oligarch. It differs from this study that focuses on the political transformations witnessed by the Russian Federation, particularly its democratic features. Khushaib sheds light on the roles of the ethnic and religious minorities in these transformations without focusing on the democratic process.
2. Hussien, Ahmed Sayyed (2015) The Role of the Political Leadership in Reestablishing the State , Russia During Putin's Era) Beirut, Arab Unity Research Center. The Author focused on the role of state in terms of its roles, borders and functions which are debatable topics among various intellectuals. He used the Role and Political Leadership Approaches, Comparative method, Content Analysis and Case Studies. With the fast-paced global developments, a certain state may fail to manage its resources and perform its functions. Consequently, the state – in a worst case scenario- transits from stability into collapse. The importance of political leadership in the such transition is to avoid the imminent collapse. President Vladimir Putin took power when Russia was suffering from a total collapse and on the edge insolvency as a result of the1998 crisis. Putin devoted his efforts to heal the Russian economy and avoid economic slump. He worked on strengthening military capabilities, achieving political consensus, and ending the state of polarization between the communist and national forces on the one hand, and the liberal forces on the other. Foreign policy was employed to serve internal priorities. The

study therefore focused on the role of the Russian political leadership in rebuilding the state, while this study will clarify the role of the ruling Russian political elite and its relationship with ethnic and religious minorities. It will explain the political transformations that accompanied the rebuilding process of the new Russian state.

3. Al Subah, Abdullah Ali Al-Malik (2017) The Strategic Transcending of the Russian Federation and its Effect on the International Balance (1991-2015) Beirut, Arab Science Printing House, the writer focuses on the strategic transcend of the Russian Federation and how it affected the international balance. The research aims to identify the conditions under which the state went through its strategic transcend and tries to identify the most significant factor that triggered the influence-effect series. The Russian transcend has already started but it is prone to relapse due to strong demographic factors. This transcend affected the four international balance factors: the international units, structure, institutes, and operations. The outcome of Al Subah's study is focused on the external relations of the Russian state, while this study tackles the Russian internal affairs, its transformations, and its linkage to the supposed role of the religious and ethnic minorities.

4. Abdul-Latifov, Ramadan (2007) The destiny of Islam in Russia (History and Horizons) translated by Yousef Salman, Beirut, Dar Al Madar, this book presented intellectual and political reflections on the course of Islam and its possible destinies in Russia, the Balkans, Central Asia, and the Caucasus; especially after the rising of "Political Islam" which took a significant fragment of the developments after the fall of the Soviet Union. It aims to prove that the groups of "Islamic" fanaticism and extremism offended Islam, and urges others to use rational thinking and eliminate fanatism and closure, in an attempt to combat extremism in all its religious, ethnic, sectarian, ideological, political, ideological, and intellectual forms. The book combines the academic qualities and journalist style. It elicits a distinct critical methodology, intending to create an intermediate level accessible to the largest possible number of readers and not restricted to the reach of the elite. This is the first work translated into the Arabic language by Dr. Ramadan Abdel-Latifov, a Russian politician and academic with interests In Islamism and Russia's relationship with the Arab and Islamic Worlds, the book concluded that the Islamic view of life and society needs to be restructured in a way that it becomes compatible with the Russian political system and terminate the state of inharmoniousness between Islamic minorities and the state in the Russian Federation. This study is based on the notion that there is no consensus among the various minorities in the Russian Federation, and exploring the future of the role of religious and ethnic minorities in the Russian Federation based on common interests and demands.
5. Shadi, Hani (2013) Democratic Transition in Russia, from Yeltsin to Putin, Learned Lessons in Ljight of the Arab Spring, Cairo, Al Ain press. The author focused on the last twenty years, an important period in Russia's history,

and how Russia transferred from Soviet Totalitarianism to Guided Democracy. With Putin's return to the presidency in 2012 and his expected presence in power until the year 2024, a plausible situation of comprehensive stagnation, similar to Leonid Brezhnev's presidency period, is foreseen. The main outcome of the study is related to the rise of "Guided Democracy" model and studying its details of political transitions in the Russian state. This study on the other hand traced the political transformations in the Russian Federation since the year 2000 and shed light on the "Guided Democracy" model within the suggested roles of ethnic and religious minorities.

6. Adel, Mohamed (2007) Muslims in Russia and Independence Plans, Cairo, Arab Center for Humanitarian Studies. The researcher focused on the past and current situation of Muslims in the Russian Federation. The study highlighted Islam's role in the increased desire for independence. With that desire comes a lot of challenges including the geography of the republics and the faded religious commitment. The researcher depends on case study methodology to explain the independence attempts in the Russian Federation. This study focuses on the religious and ethnic minorities within the context of the Russian Federation, not their separation attempts.
7. DMITRY GORENBURG, Regional Separatism in Russia: Ethnic Mobilization or Power Grab? Publication: EUROPE-ASIA STUDIES, Harvard University, Vol. 51, No. 2, 1999. The study focused on the ethnic interests of the minorities in the Russian Federation after the dissemination of the Soviet Union. Heads of republics, stimming from their sense of worry to lose their interests, sought to increase their power and acquire independence. They escalated the levels of their demands to create a margin of compromise with the center which could result in gaining the best outcomes. The study also focused on the increased nationalism of several minorities as a reaction to Soviet oppressive practices threatened their existence. The study dealt with the spread of nationalism among minorities as reactions to soviet practices that aimed at dissolving them forcefully. It also dealt with the attitude of the Russian society towards the minorities that enjoyed their rights during the harsh time following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The study concluded that minorities were able to gain several rights after the collapse of the Soviet Union, however, they all shared the desire to remain within the frame of the Russian state. The study depended on the descriptive-analytical research in monitoring analysing the nationalistic phenomenon, though it did not discuss the roles of minorities in the Russian political transformation.

8. Mikhail Alexseev, INTER-MINORITY XENOPHOBIA IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION THE SECURITY DILEMMA COMPLEX, Publication: San Diego State University, December 4, 2008, Minorities, Xenophobia, and the Effects on the Russian Society. This study focused on the situation of ethnic groups (Tatars, Adyghe (Circassians), Armenian, Kazakh, Azeri (Azerbaijan)) after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the perception of the Russian society of these groups. The study reviewed the attitude of

these minorities towards the transformations in Russia in regards to xenophobia and fanatism among Russian society. The study depended on the Case Study Approach, Group Approach, and System Method to conclude that among the Russian society, there is a division of people who regard minorities as foreigners and view them with hatred and fanatism. This study focused on samples taken from Russian society, but it didn't refer to the roles of the minorities in the political transformation in the Russian Federation.

1.10 The scientific added value (What is new)

1. This study is unique in displaying the effects of the political transformation on the religious and ethnic minorities and anticipating the future role of these minorities within the political life.
2. The study focuses on the roles of ethnic minorities in the political transformations in the Russian federation.
3. The study will focus on the internal environment of the Russian political system, its role in the political transformation and verifies whether or not these transformations were successful. Other studies were only focusing on the alignment of transformations with the western democratic model without paying any attention to their virtual results.
4. This study identifies the internal conditions of the Russian system that assisted in the success of the political transformation, and explores the possibility of maintaining this success in light of any change in the Russian leadership- represented by President Vladimir Putin.
5. The study seeks to raise the number of researchers and experts on the Russian internal condition in general, and on the nationalities of the Russian Federation in particular. This effort will contribute to the development of researches and studies that can support the stability and the establishment of a harmonized modern civil state which can provide virtual solutions to the problems of ethnic minorities.
6. This study will enrich the Arabic library on the topic of ethnic and religious minorities in one of the globally important countries – Russia.

Chapter Two
Internal environment and the institutes of the Russian political system

Introduction:

Political systems are a group of constitutional and legal principles, and political structures that are used by the authority to declare its will, and from which it derives its presence and sustainability. (Dulaimi, 2001,7). Accordingly, understanding the internal environment of any state facilitates the understanding and analysis of trends and transformations inside its political system. Researchers involved in the analysis of political systems become increasingly dependent on the experimental scientific method and the resulting behaviourism approach. With different political systems being

different in their time or culture, researchers built models that can be used for comparison between these systems, analyse their structure, and understand their trends. (Abdul Hafiz, 2007,21)

In this section, we will try to analyze the principle structure of the Russian political system by providing a brief on the history of the Russian state, its administrative, geographic, social, and military build. Moreover, studying the collapse of the Soviet Union and its effect on the current political system is inevitable to create a close picture of virtual Russia. Once the motives that lead to the collapse of the Soviet Union become obvious, it will be easy to understand the development of Russian political life and its forming factors. The study will identify the roles of the three authorities and the existing political parties, an effort that aims to highlight the institutes in the Russian political system and the internal environment that affects it.

2.1 The dissemination of the Soviet Union and its effect on creating the current political system.

This section will study the reasons behind the collapse – dissemination of the Soviet Union, one of the main powers on the globe until the year 1991, by focusing on the internal developments within the Union starting with the death of the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Yuri Andropov, until the last Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev (Al Sabah, 2017, 49)

The Soviet Union went through several political stalemates. After the death of Leonid Brezhnev in 1982 an intensive dispute surrounded his successor. Uri Andropov was eventually selected as a General Secretary of the Communist Party. In two years, Andropov managed to apply several reforms to the Soviet regime, a process that lasted until his demise in 1984. Constantine Cherninco succeeded Andropov until his death in 1985. (Abdul Alim, 2005, 210)

By the end of March 1985, the Communist Party had its seventh and final secretary. Mikhael Sergivech Gorbachev launched an immediate transformation process that included internal and external orientations of the Union. In his book (Perestroika, New thinking for our country and the world) Gorbachev explained the urge to downsize the expenditures on armament and seek for resources that can lead to modernization. He also called for new foundations to rebuild the Soviet Union. That was the Perestroika. On the other hand, Gorbachev unleashed the strategy of "Glasnost" which has the meanings of transparency and openness in Russian. He encouraged internal openness and the freedom of discussion with the west instead of confrontation and “cold war” situation. These steps were accompanied by more open economic policies towards the west and capitalism. (Gorbachev, 1990: 36)

Openness policies on both the political and economic levels faced instant inevitable failure. Rushing into the implementation with no profound evaluation revealed the weaknesses in the Soviet Union. The acute discrepancy between the Union’s rigidity and the holistic democratic reform lead to several nationality- based separate movements. During the Glasnost, the conflict over the Nagorno Karabakh region between Armenia and Azerbaijan exemplifies such movements. Nagorno Karabakh region was annexed to the Soviet Azerbaijan republic during Stalin's period. Both the

Armenians and the Azerbaijani were content. The annexation was perceived as an administrative act within the Soviet Union. With the Armenians being the majority of residents in the region, they declared independence and called for a free republic. Clashes erupt between Armenians and Azerbaijanis in the region since 1988. (Salim, 2010, 955) .

Gorbachev amended the classic structure of monocracy. The 1977 constitution was amended twice. The 2250 member Congress of People's Deputies of the Soviet Union was established by the Supreme Soviet (Supreme Council) of the Soviet Union during a meeting in December 1988. The second amendment took place in February 1990. The Congress of People's Deputies of the Soviet Union cancelled the sixth article in the Soviet constitution which stated: "…The leading and guiding force of the Soviet society and the nucleus of its political system, of all state organizations and public organizations, is the Communist Party of the Soviet Union….". The idea of a one-party state diminished. (Brimakov, 2017, 50).

Parallelly, the position of President of the Soviet Union was created, and Gorbachev was officially elected for this position in March 1990. In 1991 all Soviet Socialist republics underwent the same transition. The power was transferred from the General Secretary of the Soviet Union to the presidents.

With the termination of the Soviet Union's role, the ties between the republics within the union dissolved. Some republics sought independence and others, like the Republic of Chechnya, had ethnic conflicts. (Salim, 2014,716). It is plausible to assume that all these transformations were the basis of the current Russian system, however, did the reform mean the Soviet Union must dissolve? Was there a need for a new Russian political system?

"No" would be the logical answer to these two questions. The dissolution of the Soviet Union resulted from the simultaneous reforms that lacked for proper planning and preparation. These reforms were implemented starting from a weak position and whenever completed; the west seemed always to have increased demands for more reforms. Gorbachev’s character, armament race, depletion of national resources, and the multiplicity of ethnic groups were the reasons that lead to the dissolution of the Soviet Union (Sabah 2017, 52)

Gorbachev observed the dissolution of the Soviet Union without taking any suppressive acts. There were numerous promises of economical supports showing on the horizon, West Germany and the International Community (The World Bank and the International Monetary Bank) promised to support Russia during that critical period. The most important promise that remained unachieved – was achieved during Yeltsin's presidency period- was stopping the expansion of the NATO towards the east made by George Bush Senior. (Iskander, 2011, 121).

Gorbachev was the idol of the renovation and reform of the Soviet Union under Perestroika and Glasnost slogans. However, such enormous reform needed sufficient time and agreement between supportive elites on a clear, long term strategy rather than radical and swift change. Gorbachev planned his reforms under the Soviet system with no intention to dissolve the union. Virtually, these reforms weakened the Soviet Communist Party, terminated monocracy, demolished the classic economy system that was based on direct orders from

the party, and toppled the conservative bureaucratic partisan elite that had inherited power and prerogatives. The control of the Communist party over media abated leading to the exposure of social and economic problems that the government usually had blocked. Many reports published on the wide-spreading corruption, Mafia control, poverty, deteriorated public services, terrifying pollution, and enormous environmental problems. State archives and some statistics were easily accessible for research and publication. The credibility of the government was severely shocked after Gorbachev attempted to cover the increasing scandals. All these sudden conspicuous troubles shattered the social base that used to play a fundamental role in the Communist Party and the Soviet Union. The existence of the Soviet Union became jeopardized. (Brejinski,1999, 64)

On December 8th, 1991 presidents of three Soviet Republics (Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus) met and agreed to establish the Commonwealth of Independent States. The Soviet Union was announced to be legally and geographically terminated. (Al Sheikh, 1995, 144).

2.2 The Russian Federation, a brief:

Russia, the bridge between Asia and Europe through history, is bordered from the east by the Bering Sea, Sea of Okhotsk, and the Sea of Japan. From the west, it is bordered by Belarus, Latvia, the Gulf of Finland, and Norway. The Russian region of Kaliningrad lies between Lithuania and Poland. From the north, Russia is bordered by the Chukchi Sea, Kara Sea, Laptev Sea, East Siberian Sea, and the Barents Sea, which are all branches of the Arctic Ocean. From the south, it is bordered by China, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and the Black Sea. In the far southeast, it is bordered by North Korea which makes the total number of countries adjacent to it 16. In addition to such geostrategic significance, Russia has some of the world's most important water bodies including the Caspian Sea/ Lake- the world's largest saltwater lake- Baikal Lake, and the Black Sea. With a total of 37653 Km of borders and continental location, Russia has a strategic manoeuvring area with extremely unlikelihood of being controlled by any invading forces. (Khushaib, 2015, 17)

The collapse of the Soviet Union- according to Zbignio Brejinski- created a black hole of power in Eurasia. Russia's borders with the west retreated and its dominance in the Baltic abated. Its position as a controlling power in the Black sea seized after Ukraine had withdrawn from beneath its umbrella. In the Caucasus, Turkey found some free space and all the Russian influence faded in central Asia – a source of energy and a possible Islamic challenge- A new status of the Caspian Sea emerged after new countries had started to demand their shares in it. 20 million Russians remained outside their motherland inside former Soviet republics.

Historically, Russia was absent from the international arena for about 200 years. In 1480 Ivan the Great (1505- 1452) unified the Rus princedoms and replaced Kyiv with Moscow as a center of the rising power. With the efforts of Ivan the Great, Vasily the Third, and Ivan the Fourth during the sixteenth century, Russia had its largest known expansion. For three centuries (1613- 1917), Russian

geopolitics were deeply forged in the international arena, the Tsarist Russia was globally recognized power. (Kitin K 2001, 11).
In 1917 the Bolshevik Revolution erupted causing wide-spreading civil wars across Russian territories. Finland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Ukraine, and Moldova became independent. Later during the socialist era, all these countries except Finland became either member of the Soviet Union or socialist states. After World War II (1939-1945), Russia became a global pole and commenced its role as an antagonist of the west during what was known as the cold war (Bino 1997, 64). A campaign for spreading the socialist ideology was always a Russian tool to face western threats.
The fundamental change in the international system took place in 1991. Russia surfaced as a state with plentiful of troubles. It lost vast areas that were once controlled by Russian power, the Baltic countries, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. The geopolitical power of Russia became obsolete. New Russian leaders became obsessed with the idea of retrieving an international status and a regional role in light of the new post-cold war map. (Abdel Hamid 2009: 22).
Russia is with no doubt a multinational polity. Its 1993 constitution states "we the multinational people of the Russian Federation …" The number of ethnic groups in the Russian Federation is 160 including Russians, Tatars, Ukrainians, Bashkirs, Chuvash, Chechens, and Armenians. According to the 2017 census the Russians are the largest ethnicity with 116 million people in total, a number that equals 79.8 % of the total population of 143.5 million. (Farah 2017, 96).
Russia's natural resources are enormous; it has an area of 20 million hectares of arable lands, 120.000 rivers, the largest freshwater lake in the world (Baikal), and the world's third-largest gold reserve of 597.3 billion in the year 2008.
The mainstay of the Russian economy remains the energy sector. It is one of the countries influencing factors on Russian foreign and security policies.
Russia is the world's seventh-richest country in oil, with 10-12 % of the world's total reserve. In 2017 oil production raised to 10.98 million barrels daily, the highest record in 30 years. Most of this production is for local use, exporting the remaining amount makes Russia the world's second-biggest exporter.
Oil production contributes to the Russian GDP by 13 %. As for gas, Russia is the world's largest exporter, revenues of gas and oil contribute to more than 50% of the hard currency returns.
In Russia, there is a dominant belief that the future is forged through the development of the economy. With its massive energy sector, Russia can guarantee the independence of its foreign policies, develop the army, and practice regional and global influence. (Jasim 2016:257)
Russia's internal security and its foreign interests are upheld through a fundamental factor, military power. Being a superpower is not new to Russia. It has been so for a long time through modern history, and recently, with its Nuclear power and unique strategic weapons, it is the most prominent rival to the United States. Russia modernized the ancient military power inherited from the Soviet Union. The military was restructured considering modern warfare, the technology and quality of Russian arms enabled a fierce competition with the US in the global market. Russian exports in military industries are only second to

the US with a revenue of 15 billion dollars. The Russian military is divided into land forces 39% , marine forces 14%, and air forces 14.5%. (Jasim, 2016: 256).

2.3 Institutes of the Russian political system:

The general atmosphere of the political life in a country is understood by identifying the institutional and political inputs and by spotting the centers of decision making.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia continued to be ruled through the constitution of the 1st of April 1978. The new constitution was drawn up on the 12th of September 1993 and was endorsed by a majority of 62% of the total votes (Al Asfahani 1994: 95).

The constitution of 1993 consists of two main parts:

Part one: Which includes the main articles and is divided into nine chapters: The Basics of Constitutional System, The Rights and Liberties of the Citizen, The Russian State, The state President, Parliament, Government, Judicial Power, Judicial Governments, and the Special Rules for Constitution Amendments.

Part two: is the final and transitional measures. According to this constitution, Russia is a federal democratic state with a presidential system, has one currency- ruble, one capital- Moscow, one language- Russian language, with the right to use local languages besides Russian in the republics. The constitution stated that Russia is a secular country and religion is separated from the state. (Russian Federation constitution 1993, and amendments 2014,2017).

According to its constitution, Russia is divided into 89 territories as follows: 21 republics, 6 districts, 49 regions (oblast), 2 federal cities (Moscow and Saint Petersburg), one autonomous territory (the Jewish territory), and ten autonomous regions.

The central federal government in Moscow has many duties including foreign trade, foreign policies, signing treaties, war and peace issues, military industry and trade, security and defence treaties, sea, land, and space border defence, nuclear-related issues, and judicial activities. (Al Sheikh 2010: 14).

It is worth mentioning that on the 30th of September 2008, the former president Dmitry Medvedev approved the law for the constitution amendment. The amendments made therefore were related to extending periods of the state presidency, and the chairmanship of the Duma Council. The presidency period was raised from 4 to 6 years and Duma chairmanship became 5 years instead of 4.(Russian Federation constitution 1993, and amendments 2014,2017)

The executive power:

While the executive power is divided between the state president and the prime minister, the president remains the dominant side.

1. The president: is the head of state, elected by the public every six years. Despite the amendment of the presidency period took place and approved by the parliament in 2008, it didn't apply immediately. The amendments were effective during the 2012

elections. The president's office is located in the Kremlin in Moscow. The basis of both the internal and foreign policies is to be formed by the president who is the supreme leader of the armed forces and has the right to revoke legislations. The president handles the citizenship issues in the Russian Federation, awards medals of honour, and has the right to extend general amnesty.

2. The executive government: The chores of the government are distributed between several ministries. Some of these ministries have federal jurisdiction and perform federal missions. The state president appoints the prime minister while the Duma council endorses the president's selection. The government engages in domestic and foreign policies, handles the federal budget, supervises the development of banking and monetary policies, and ensures liberties and human rights. (Medvedev, 2018: 40)

The legislative power:

Also called the Russian Parliament or the Federal Assembly and is the highest legislative and parliamentary institute in the Russian Federation (Article 94, The Russian constitution), where the legal status of the Federal Assembly lays under the fifth chapter of the constitution.

Under article 95 of the constitution, the authorities and functions of the Federal Assembly were divided between two councils: the Duma (Peoples' deputies) and the Federation Council (Representatives from the Federal Entities). Duma council is elected for 5 years, and while the Federation Council period is not determined, the method of selecting both councils is determined by federal laws.

The federal assembly is theoretically one body, however, both councils do not work jointly. The constitution dictates that each council is held separately except when: listening to the president's messages, listening to the messages from the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation, and listening to speeches from presidents of foreign countries. (Legislative power: Russian Duma Website http://duma.gov.ru).

1. Federal Council: Is a higher council that includes two representatives from each federal entity, one of which comes from its legislature and the other from the executive power. The council has the following responsibilities:
   A. Ratification of decrees declaring a state of emergency and martial laws.
   B. Disqualification of the head of state after accusations made by the Duma Council.
   C. Appointment of the judges in the Constitutional Court and the Supreme Economic Court after being nominated by the Russian president.

The council has also powers in other federal issues related to state borders and using the Russian armed forces outside Russia (Al Asfahani, 2015: 96)

2. Duma Council: or the Council of Russian Federation Peoples' deputies which consists of 450 members. Since 2007 members of Duma has been elected according to the relative system (based on parties lists). In 2005 the electoral barrier was raised to 7 % (the minimum percentage for a party to be represented in Duma) in a step to marginalize small parties and unwanted candidates. In 2008 the election law was amended to enable Duma members to become elected for 5 years instead of 4 starting from the 2011 elections. The amended law gave Duma council a censorship role on the executive government which is requested to provide an annual performance report. Duma council approves the appointments made by the state president like the position of prime minister. It also votes during the processing of some federal laws (more than two-thirds of the Duma members and three-quarters of the Federal Council members) including emergency law and the law of accepting a new entity within the Russian Federation. The Duma is entitled to vote on amendments of the constitution regarding legislative power issues. (Legislative power: Russian Duma Website http://duma.gov.ru)

Judiciary power:

A separate power that operates independently from the legislative and executive ones. The Russian judiciary system consists of constitutional federal courts and magistrates.

The judicial system consists of:

1. Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation.
2. Supreme Court of the Russian Federation.
3. Supreme Cassation Court of the Russian Federation.

1. Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation.

A judicial body specialized in constitutional oversight and has roles in protecting the constitutional structures, rights, and basic liberties of humans and citizens, declare and validate the principles of the Russian Federation constitution across the Russian state.

2. Supreme Court of the Russian Federation.

Is the highest judicial power in civic, criminal, and administrative issues that oversights activities of courts with general issues, military, and federal courts. This court is higher than supreme courts in the republics and autonomous regions, and higher than martial courts in the military districts' fleets, classes, and groups of the armed forces.

3. Supreme Cassation Court of the Russian Federation.

This is the highest judicial power specialized in economical conflicts and conflicts that fall under the jurisdiction of the cassation courts. The supreme cassation court oversights the implementation of the procedures under the Federal law and explains the judicial process. (Russian Federation constitution 1993, and amendments 2014,2017).

Despite the controversy surrounding the electoral system in the Russian Federation, it is still arguably considered democratic. The electoral system guarantees the freedom of choice for the citizens in elections and referendums and protects the principles of democracy and voting rights.
The Russian constitution recognizes pluralism and a multi-party system. The state guarantees equality between political parties in front of the law. There is no discrimination between parties based on their principles, goals, or responsibilities mentioned in their foundational documents. In principle, the state protects the rights and the legitimate interest of the political parties.
The relationship between the powers in the Russian Federation had always been of a competitive and conflictive nature. The peak of such nature was during the Yeltsin era, despite that, the control was entirely within the executive power (the president). The relationship changed after Putin due to his smart policy to contain the parliament and to reconcile the disputes between the elites by employing his persona and the appeal of his program (The Russian Federation Ministry of Education and Scientific Research website: http://ar.russia.edu.ru/russia/government/)

Since 1993 the political system in Russia has always been magnifying the powers of the president and limiting those of the parliament. The president has the full right to dissolve the Duma and call for new elections. In principle, Duma's approval must be obtained for the president's candidate for the Prime Minister position. However, according to the constitution, and after the third rejection of the president's candidate, the president has the right to dissolve the Duma council, call for new elections and appoint his Prime Minister.
The ruling system in Russia is described as "Vertical Power", a term developed by the elites to describe a submission-based dictatorship characterized by full control in the hands of the executive power. Lilia Shevtsova, a Kremlinology expert, describes the system as" The Russian model is rather unique, a patriarchy, with full control extended by the state over individuals, a notion that Russia is a great power, in its center is an omnipotent leader who is above the law, unquestionably monopolizes the power, and alienates other institutions into mere administrative bodies" . (Bulmakhel, 2009: 90).

The 1993 constitution bestowed the president effective tools to dominate the Duma Council's decisions, these are:

1. The president represents the Russian federation domestically and externally and determines its local and foreign policies.
2. The president has the full right to designate and remove the prime minister and his deputies. The president has also the right to dissolve the government in case he believed that was necessary.
3. The president has the right to designate the Head of the Central Bank. He represents the defense policy of the state and he is the higher commander of the armed forces.
4. The president has the right to call for elections or referendum, to suggest amending the constitution, draft laws, declare martial law, and declare emergency. (Al Sheik 1998: 60).

2.4 Party system

Problems started in 1989 when the leaders of the communist party faced an increasing demand for freedom of expression. The demands were to amend chapter 7 of the 1977 constitution that emphasized controlling all rights and freedoms by the Communist Party. In February 1990, the Central Committee of the Communist Party approved the amendment. Seventy years of one-part system, preceded by decades of autocratic Tsarist rule had ended and resulted in major party chaos. Before the 1993 legislative elections, an estimate of 40 new political parties were active on the ground. At a later stage, the alliance between the new parties resulted in three main ideologies:

1- Rightists: with the western model as their reference this orientation of radical reformers headed by the Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev (1990-1995), supports rapid transformation to the market economy and privatization.
2- Leftists: an orientation adopted by nationalists and headed by Vladimir Zhirinovsky, the presidential candidate against Putin in 1991. This orientation emphasizes the Russian unity and calls for a return to pre-communist era, it is more sceptical towards the west, eager to revive the Orthodox heritage of Russia, believes in the centralization, and the development of military powers.
3- Centrists: an orientation headed by Arkadi Volsky, a prominent leader in the Soviet Socialist Party, which is in the middle between the lift and right wings, this orientation believes in democracy and the need for an economic reform (AlSheikh, 53:2010).

The political arena was packed with other microscopic parties unable to collect the minimum members around their goals and therefore failed to participate in the elections. Other parties were not present in all territories like the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) which only had branches in one-third of the Russian regions. Such parties were characterized by limited membership, LDP for example had a mere 300 members. Under such dispersion and big number of parties, it is difficult to say that a clear and defined party system existed. Among a total of 50 parties and coalition, the Communist movement was considered the main organized until March 1990 when the sixth article of the constitution, which gave the power to the Communist party, was cancelled. At this point, the Russian Democratic Movement, which developed from a coalition of democratic parties, initiated a group of reforms. Soon after it surfaced, the movement was divided after the collapse of the Soviet Union. It was replaced by separate democratic parties including:

- The Industrial- Agricultural Party.
- Soviet Party of the Russian Federation headed by Gennady Zyuganov.
- Fatherland-All Russia (OVR)
- Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR).
- Union of Right Forces
- Russian United Democratic Party "Yabloko"

- United Russia Party (Boulmkahil, 39: 2009)

Many elections were conducted in the Russian Federation since its establishment. The political scene reflects an image of the never united parties that were formed under the pressure of changes in the internal and external political arenas. After President Putin took power, the scene was completely changed. A good example of the improvement of party life is the results of the 2007 and 2011 elections. These elections resulted in 60% votes for United Russia, a result that provided Putin with the necessary power to start his overall political reform scheme across Russia. This result was fundamentally crucial as it enabled Putin to maintain his political powers in the parliament (315 seats of a total of 450). The Socialists, having the second-highest votes had a mere 11.5 %, which is equivalent to 57 seats. United Russia, the governing party, was supported by two main parties in Duma: The Liberal Democratic Party headed by Vladimir Zhirinovsky with 40 seats and A Just Russia Party headed by Sergey Mironov with 38 seats. (Shadi 2007, 40).
Boris Gryzolov the head of the (Russia Party) described these elections (2008) as "a referendum to approve Putin, and we can confidently say that he won". A spokesperson from the Kremlin said, "The primary results indicate that the majority of the Russians support President Putin and approve his path (after his second presidency period is over)". Already supported by the election results and the available power to amend the constitution, Putin preferred to step behind his deputy prime minister then, Dimitry Medvedev, who became the state President in the same year. (Putin wins the Russian elections, and Medvedev praises the democratic practices: 2011)
2011 elections did not have any new outcomes. Like its precedents, the ruling party excelled except in Duma where its number of seats decreased. United Russia had 48.5% of the total votes, therefore the absolute majority the party was lost. The Socialist Party remained second in Duma with 19.8 % of the total votes, A Just Russia (middle leftist) had 12.8% and the Liberal Democratic Party (Nationalist) had 14.42 %. The Russian United Democratic Party "Yabloko" did not exceed the 7% threshold necessary to be represented in Duma. The results showed the Russian public support for the internal reforms and the foreign directions founded by Putin. In 2012 Putin returned to power after being elected by the public. The credit of the whole Russian political scene is referred to as: "Putin's efforts that limited the political fragmentation inherited from the Soviet Union, which was particularly conspicuous during Yeltsin's period." (Jasim 2016:263)

2.5 The influencing powers in Russian political life:

The Russian political life is influenced by many powers of which the presidency institute comes on top. Others include all internal powers. After I have tackled the roles of state institutes and political parties, whether loyal, opposite, left-wing, and right-wing, I will try to focus on the effects made by other powers namely political, economic and military elites, public opinion, press, and the institute of the church.

1. The military: we can plausibly claim that the military had a very limited role in the political transformations in the Russian Federation. In his book (The Soldier and the State) Huntington suggests that the chance for the army to interfere is greater in times of political void, transition, and modernization. When trying to reflect Huntington's assumption on the Russian model, we can see that even though Yeltsin tried to fill the political void by all means he failed when he used the military force. The system at that time had marginalized the parliament and other partisan powers which created a massive void that, according to Huntington, would create a bigger chance for military interference. The missing point was the Russian economy. The collapsing economy had a direct impact on the military's capacity to interfere. That triggers a valid question: would the Russian military, in light of such an economical challenge, have any political power? Overall, the military could not have been a main political decision-maker despite the influence of many driving factors. The military hesitated to support Yeltsin's break into the parliament in October 1993. Its stance towards the Chechen issue leaned towards non-involvement to the extent that a division took place between the Defence Minister and the Chief of Military. (Bu Lmakahil 2009:94)
   Since his first day in power, Putin, in his way, depended on security and intelligence institutes to run the administrative positions in the state. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, all the state institutes dissolved except the Soviet Intelligence (KGB) where its staff became the main source of seniors in many public and bureaucratic positions. Shortly, more than 1500 senior officers and military leaders were allowed to enroll in the elections and become governors of districts and regions. Many became members of the government staff, Federal Council, Accounting Chamber, and several ministries. It was all part of Putin's strategy to activate the military and armed forces. Eventually, the total number of intelligence officers employed as state officials exceeded 6000 agents by the year 2003. (Yousef 2008:82).
   According to a study conducted by The Russian Sociology Council, one-fourth of the political staff have a background in security forces, especially the intelligence. Many observers see that intelligence is a tool used by the military institute to practice power. The study showed that 35 % of the total ministers assigned between the years 2000 and 2005 were in one way or another coming from the intelligence institute. 25% of the executive and parliament members belong to these "Power Structures". (Baktash, 2013:22)
2. Economic and Political elites: the privatization process lead by Yeltsin and his team of Modern Liberals resulted in the establishment of a class of a new businessmen network and state officials known as (The Family). This group benefited from the state of ample cash that accompanied the collapse of the Soviet Union. In that particular period, many names emerged to the surface, Boris Berezovsky Mikhail Khodorkovsky, and Roman Abramovich who all had their share in the low price state institutes. They all paid so few to possess these institutes and made billions

of US dollars. After Putin took power, the clash started with the existing oligarch networks. One main clash was with Khodorkovsky the billionaire owner of Yukos Oil. The reason was obvious: the expansion of the state power. State profits from oil exports grew from 13 % to 55 % in 2013. (Shadi, 2012,136).

To establish his new powers, Putin depended on statesmen who previously belonged to security institutes. Known as "Silovik", or experienced statesmen in Russian, this group had a big influence on the Russian foreign policies. Mikhail Fradkov, the current head of foreign intelligence services, Sergei Ivanov, the head of the presidential court, and Igor Sechin the former deputy head of the presidential court were pillars of this group that believed mainly in protecting Russia from the influence of the west. The group adopts an anti-west policy based on thoughts of the co-founder of United Russia party Alexander Dugin, a politician that has close ties with Putin and exemplifies the radical side of the Siloviks. Siloviks perceive themselves as Soviets but not socialists with their priority being national security. On the other side, an elite of economists, lawmen, and businessmen known as “The Liberals” was created. The Liberals had a different approach towards the west, they believed that it was for the good of Russia and better economic development, they had to accept the fact of openness to the west. Putin summoned one of the symbols of the liberal, Dimitri Medvedev, to be his supporter inside the Kremlin, an act that was aiming to balance the effect of this group. Putin had an intelligence service background, where Medvedev was a lawman who has always been a civilian. (Kushaib :2015,67). Arguably, the Russian internal politics and the distribution of state positions depend on the equilibrium between these two groups: Siloviki, represented by Putin, and Liberals, represented by Medvedev. Silovikis controlled the ministries of interiors, foreign affairs, and intelligence, while Liberals assumed control in the ministries of finance, economics, and justice. At the same time, other state institutes were shared between the two groups, while Gazprom, the giant gas company, was controlled by Silovikis, Russ Oil was under the Liberals' disposal. Overall, the major clash between the two groups took place inside the Kremlin. Vladislav Surkov, the first deputy head of the presidential court and later the star of the Russian policies during the previous decade, was able to push for several thoughts and policies that changed the face of Russia. Sorokov was the creator of the "Ramzan Kadyrov" solution, the Chechen President back then, and the founder of the United Russia party. He supported political democracy by nurturing minor opposition parties and was a dedicated patron of Skolkovo Innovation Center, the Russian version of the Silicon Valley. On the external level, Liberals adopted openness towards the west. In his annual speech addressed the Duma, Medvedev elaborated on the need for modernizing the state and avoiding past errors. Medvedev's scheme to partner with the west was rather ambitious, however, it was fruitful. In 2011 Russia joined the World Trade Organization and Medvedev

maintained his emphasis on the importance to privatize the public sector.
On the opposite side, Silovikis followed radically different policies. In his speech before the Duma in 2012, Putin outlined national and patriotic feelings, he traced the Russian unique history during thousands of years, and in the same year, with the purpose to show force to the west, the Russian military conducted big scale exercise. In May 2013 Sorokov resigned from his position. (Medvedev, 2018: 29).
Businessmen across Russia were forced to pay bribes to the politicians. Many of the business and financial barons close to Putin, including those of military and security backgrounds who obey his views in politics, economy, and public reform, were on these bribe lists. The effect of Oligarch on the Russian economy was obvious; wealth started to accumulate in their hands. They became more influential in decision making to the extent of forging a certain pattern of development that was only focused in big cities while rural and distant municipalities were marginalized. (Shadi, 2012:137).
The increasing negative effects on the relationship between politics and the economy triggered the need for internal reforms. This had a clear impact on the Russian options regarding its relationship with the west. Aiming to promote western investments in the Russian market, Putin strengthened his relationship with Russian businessmen who had business ties with western investors. Putin assigned Mikhail Khodorkovsky, Vladimir Petani, from Yukos Oil and Oleg Deripaska to the executive committee of the Russian Union of Industry and Commerce Chambers. The three became in close contact with Putin, however, all the inputs and indicators started to shift after Putin's influence increased. Khodorkovsky's increased support to the opposition parties, namely the liberals, reformers, and rightists, lead to a swift change in his status. He was arrested on counts of money laundering and tax evading. (Yousuf, 2008:80).

3. Public Opinion: In the last several years the Russian decision-maker became interested in the directions of public opinion. Polls in Izvestia, Pravda, and other Russian newspapers captured the attention. Public opinion had a very limited effect due to the declining living standards and deteriorating economic conditions. Despite the growing need, the Russian public was unable to shape a strong influential opinion. The long struggle of the Russian public during the Tsarist era, Communism, and the recent deterioration of economy and social life hindered such process. This was obvious since the 1996 elections and had a clear manifestation in the last elections when Putin came back to power. Against all calls among the public to boycott the elections, this one had a very high rate of voters across the state. (Khushaib, 2015:71).
4. Press and media: The freedom of press and media started particularly in the period of Gorbachev. In the middle of 1993, the Russian Parliament issued the press law, which was supposed to be a guarantor for freedom of the press. The Russian press was still lying under the influence of

businessmen and the government itself, both of which provide the press with the needed funding. The press policies were far from being independent and were directed by big companies in the Russian Federation. Control of press and media was the main pillar in the colosseum built by Putin. The state controls all TV channels that broadcast to the Russian territories, and on the other side monitors other media tools. This control goes in parallel with decreased freedom of the judiciary as seen in Colonel Budanov's matter. Budanov was arrested on the count of raping and murdering a Chechen girl, where he was granted a pardon after a long court. The state-controlled media justified the pardon to the public opinion. Budanov was killed in vengeance by a Chechen man in 2005. The state control over media has several side effects, mainly the relapse to the Soviet era when major media institutes and politicians were misled. (Boulmakahil,2009:93).

In a clear example of the oligarch control, Putin used the media to destroy his opponents during his presidential campaign in 1998- 1999. Yury Luzhkov, the mayor of Moscow at that time, and Yevgeny Primakov, a former minister of foreign affairs had both their reputation distorted through the media, a mission that was assigned to the famous TV presenter Sergey Dorinko. Berezovsky, a main shareholder in the Russian popular Channel One supported Dorinko in the accusations of Putin's competitors. Luzhkov was accused of theft in partnership with his wife who was accused of transferring money abroad, he also was accused of being an accomplice to an American businessman murder, a crime that he failed to refute at the right time. Once done with Luzhkov, it was easy to display Primakov as an old man who fits in an aged nursing home rather than the Kremlin.

It worth mentioning that the Jewish capital had been vividly participating in shaping the Russian media. It controlled several significant journals and TV channels. Vladimir Gusinsky, the head of the Russian Jewish Congress owned the largest private TV Company "NTV". The summation of all these backstage influencing powers is the real problem. The public in general lost its trust in the Russian press and media institution. (Shiftsova, 2006:59).

5. Church: In contrast to the Western Church, the Russian Eastern Orthodox Church could not isolate itself from the state. The relationship was built on the "Nut" principle, where the church is the seed and the state is the coat. Despite its announced atheism, the Soviet authorities sought an alliance with the church, in 1990 Boris Yeltsin depended on the church to win public support. (Malashinko, 2018:131).

Russia has been following the Orthodox Church for ages, since its arrival in 988 by Vladimir the Grand Prince of Kyiv, the followers of Russian Orthodox Christianity increased. Currently, with 125 million followers, it is considered the biggest eastern church in the world. The Russian Orthodox Church followers were persecuted after the Bolshevik

revolution in 1917, the Soviet security services imprisoned the Patriarch and executed him by orders from the authorities.

The church influence had always remained visible across the patriotic history of Russia especially during WWII. For example, the Patriarchate of Moscow made a generous gift to the Soviet Red Army, which was used to purchase a big number of tanks. Currently, the role of the church is conspicuous especially after the end of the Medvedev period when observers noticed the converging between President Putin and Patriarch Kirill who described the first as "Gods miracle". In 2014, the Newsweek writer Peter Pomerantsev explained this convergence in his article by saying: "…powerful men in the Orthodox Church had a decisive role in assisting Putin to restructure the liberal opposition battle against administrative corruption, and the allegations of election fraud by simply changing it into a sacred text: "demon foreigners" acting against "sacred Russia"…" (Farah, 2017:121).

Since his last election, Putin is being defended by a group of monks and priests. During the last election campaign, Patriarch Kirill of Moscow described Putin as the man who pulled Russia out of the crisis that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union. Kirill described Putin as a reform leader sent by God to save the country. There is no doubt that such declarations had a great effect on the Russians who rushed into voting for Vladimir Putin. The public was repelled by statements made by priests, in a television show Patriarch Kirill said "Liberalism will lead to a legal collapse", Archpriest Dimitri Smirnov considered in a TV debate that people must always remember that the first rebel in history was the devil himself, in a clear reference to liberal opposition and revolutionists. Putin, from his side, won the Russian Orthodox church by pledging to allocate 10 billion US dollars for rebuilding worship houses and funding religious schools. Alternatively, Putin received a request from the head of the Patriarchal department of public affairs in the church, Bishop Hilarion, to promise to protect religious minorities in the Middle East during what was called "Arab Spring". (Amin, 2012: 23).

The question about the growing political role of the Russian Orthodox Church became inevitable. In a major transformation that displays the ambitions of the church in Russian political life, a new decree was issued in 2011 that allowed churchmen to run for elections to protect church interests. Moreover, the church revealed that in case of an opposition political movement with clear anti-church agendas run for any elections, the church will mobilize the support from the Sacred Church Community to nominate one of its members to run against that movement. This decision is also applicable for executive positions and even for foreign levels. The Russian foreign agenda is regularly discussed between the ministers of foreign affairs and members of the church, recent meetings were to discuss the church's support to the Kremlin in its efforts to protect the Orthodox minority in the Middle East.

Referring to the Syrian crises, the head of the Russian Patriarchal department for foreign affairs, Nicolay Balashov, indicated that recent

turmoil in the Middle East increased the importance of church interference in Russian foreign affairs. (Khushaib, 2015:77)

Varying in their impact on the Russian political arena, all these powers are relatively less influential when compared to the presidency institute. Putin bestowed himself enormous authorities that led the observers to describe him as "the Tsar of the constitution".
In this context, Ibrahim Arafat, the political writer, describes the Russian political system as an "Anarchism presidency". This kind of systems is unique by its nature, there is a clear center of power, a president with wide authorities given by the constitution who attracts several political powers, where all these powers try to maintain a direct relationship with the president and therefore lose their power as independent factors in the local political arena. (Boulmakahil, 2009:95)

Summary of chapter 2:
In this chapter, the study focused on the internal environment of the Russian political system, the importance of modern Russia in terms of geographic location, history, and economy. Aiming to explain the nature of the regime, the study also sheds light on the institutional structure, the foundation of the Russian political system, and the complicated relationship between the powers. The chapter also displayed the overall image of the rich party life in Russia and explained the dynamics between parties and political powers and its influence in forging the political life in Russia.

Chapter 3
Political transformations in the Russian Federation

Introduction:

Never an easy matter was the political transformation for Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The burdens of a fallen totalitarian government with a legacy of disguised unemployment were enormous. The mission to transform the state into a modern westernized system was filled with political, ideological social, and administrative obstacles. The transformation between regimes was rather complicated. To visualize the overall situation, we can refer to the words of the current president of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin "Above all, we should acknowledge that the collapse of the Soviet Union was a major geopolitical disaster of the century. As for the Russian nation, it became a genuine drama. Tens of millions of our citizens and compatriots found themselves outside Russian territory. The epidemic of disintegration infected Russia itself."

Vladimir Putin, a veteran from the previous regime took power after President Yeltsin when Russia was facing a total collapse and on the verge of bankruptcy after the 1998 August crisis (a financial crisis due to inability to pay foreign debts). In that period, Russia's central authority was fragile, unable to combat corruption, or face economic and political instabilities. Separatist movements accompanied by blood-shedding, unstable foreign relationships, retrogression, and clear retraction from the regional and global arena were Russia's main features when Putin came to power. Without any doubt Putin is considered the founder of modern Russia, he faced all these obstacles and was able to relocate the Russian Federation on the world map as the heir of

the Soviet Union, accepting all the consequences that came with that legacy. (Hussein,2015: 12)
The constituents of the Russian state after the Soviet Union were at their furthest retreat. It is acceptable to describe it as "a failed state". Despite the absence of a comprehensive definition of such term, a failed state is the one which stopped performing its duties as a result of structural collapse, loss of legitimacy, and a total collapse in its legal and political systems (Amroush, 2012: 24). It is also described as "Collapsed state", "Fragile state", "Weak state", "Semi-state", "Loose state", "Endangered state", and " Failure inclined state". (Abu Amra: 2008, 34).
Bankrupted, with disintegrated institutes, Russia during Yeltsin's period was heading to the unknown. Putin, however, succeeded in diverting it from that destined path, a success which triggers the question of the role of the political leadership in restructuring the state.
This chapter addresses the first group of transformations in the Russian state after the collapse of the Soviet Union. That includes President Yeltsin's coming to power and the factors that made this transformation difficult. The chapter ends by addressing the second and most important transition of electing President Putin and explaining the development of political leadership in the Russian Federation.

3.1 The political situation in Russia before President Putin:

This chapter is about the emergence of Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the main transformations, and changes in the internal system:

Internal Russian developments:

The 25th of December 1991 was the date of the legal and political demise of the Soviet Union. This was not a result of military action but a summation of economic and social crises along with the economic siege forced by the west (Arms Race) and the failure of the political elite to develop a comprehensive program to face any future crises. (Saleem, 1922:146).
All the Soviet legacy was inherited by Russia, including its seat in the United Nations, the permanent seat in the Security Council, and strategic and nuclear arsenal. Boris Yeltsin, as mentioned earlier, was the first elected president by the legislative council in June 1991, Russia became independent, so as 15 other countries that once were all called "The Soviet Union". (Al-Subah, 2017:58).
Russia entered a new era unprepared, it was still governed by the 1977 Soviet constitution, when it faced the institutional crisis of the transformation between Marx ideologies into restrictive political pluralism. All of this happened when the executive power was under the highest power of the state, The Duma (Al Qaisi: 2014: 157).
Boris Yeltsin and his government accepted the four main conditions from the International Economic Organizations: establishing a free market, introducing state democracy, refraining from any imperial expansion, and searching for a new geopolitical role for Russia.

The president demanded wider authorities to implement his economic reform plan. In November 1991 the parliament bestowed the president his desired powers in a step to support the economic plan known as "The Comprehensive Rapid Privatization". Following what was known as "Shock Therapy", Yeltsin was trying to end the state control over production, distribution, and pricing, minimizing governmental support and expenses, selling public companies to the private sector (privatization), and opening the doors for foreign investment. (Saleem, 2012: 32).

Yeltsin chose Alexander Rutskoy as a deputy. He believed that Rutskoy's long military history in Afghanistan will help to earn the loyalty and support from the military. Rutskoy started unexpectedly, he uncovered a series of economical scandals which Yeltsin was involved in, leading to his dismissal from his position as a deputy of the president. The decision to dismiss Rutskoy was revoked by the Higher Constitutional Court, on the contrary, a group of opposition parliament members suggested to remove Yeltsin himself. The suggestion was made during the eighth session of the Duma in March 1993, but failed to achieve two-thirds of the total vote. (AL sheikh 1998: 48).

The moment negative social and economic consequences started to affect Russian's life, the parliament started criticizing Yeltsin's reform scheme and his political and economic policies. Neglecting the role of the Duma, Yeltsin requested wider authorities from the public to undergo his scheme, a request that was abolished by the Higher Constitutional Court. There was a struggle to fill the void left after the collapse of the Soviet Union Institutions. A state of caution spread among the society resulting from the expected transfer between two radically different systems. (Al Sabah, 2017: 60). Russia faced its first constitutional crisis since the dissolve of the Soviet Union, the parliament responded by removing Yeltsin and assigning Rutskoy as an acting president. Yeltsin refused the Duma's decision and continued to escalate the situation. According to the still valid Soviet Constitution, the 1990 elected parliament (General Conference of Russian People) was the highest power in Russia. Without the parliament, Yeltsin was unable to assign a new head of government nor to pass laws for reform. Moving to the attacking position, Yeltsin ordered to dissolve the parliament in 1993. Members of Parliament, reacting to the unconstitutional decision taken by Yeltsin, issued a decision to remove him from the presidency. Yeltsin responded by force, barricaded the parliament, and a few hours later army tanks began to shell the parliament (White House). Rutskoy was arrested along with the head of the parliament Ruslan Khasbulatov and between 123 to 157 people were killed. (Al Azza 2000: 28).

In 1993 a new constitution was adopted after a general referendum. A new parliamentary election was organized, the president was given wide powers both internally and on the foreign level. These powers prevented any possible conflict with the parliament as the president became the central power of the Russian Political System. In light of the new constitution, the then President Boris Yeltsin became the heart of the political process. The executive power control over the state grew to the limit where a chance to build a democratic parliamentary republic diminished, and the struggle to control the post-Soviet

state ended. (Al Sheikh, 1998: 52). The Russian public elected a new parliament that, as a first step, changed the structure of the Russian power. While Yeltsin had previously represented a mere form of power that can be controlled by the parliament, he became greatly reinforced that no institution could jeopardize his power, and his quest towards the west in a modern liberal style became feasible. (Abdallah, 2011:93).
Yeltsin's administration performed wide reforms, though of no clear features that are subject to state monitoring, only swift changes with a random transfer of state properties into the private sector on basis of patronage and power relations. Catastrophic consequences started to emerge, people lost their trust in the state, which in turn failed to control the new situation, and the healthcare system became severely inefficient after the state stopped supporting any social care programs. Soon after that, Russia started to face the major problem of population decrease. (Al Sabah 2017: 64).
With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia suffered from a major problem; nationalism, and identity reformation within the new federation. The central authority of the state had started to weaken a while ago. The policies adopted by Mikhail Gorbatchev encouraged separatism among Soviet nations and weakened the central power, regions, and republics sought more authorities, some even sought independence.
The Autonomous Republic of Chechnya was among the republics to choose separation. On 27 October 1991, General Dzhokhar Dudayev was elected as head of the republic, a few days later, on 1 November 1991, Dudayev declared the independence of the Chechen Republic. (Mulchin, 2001: 132).
After dialogue failure between Grozny and Moscow the later decreed emergency in Chechnya. In 1994, conflict erupted between the Russian central authority and the separatist Chechens.
In response to the declaration of its new constitution, the Russian government bombed Grozny, starting a war that lasted two years. On 31 August 1996, both sides signed a ceasefire agreement.
The recognition of the status quo of Chechnya's independent and forces withdrawal was agreed on. War in Chechnya provoked a new wave of opposition in the Russian regions. No doubt this had resulted in another Russian-Chechnian conflict during the period of president Putin who vowed and therefore succeeded in suppressing the Chechen separatists.
The partial independence of Chechnya inspired Dagestan nationals and resulted in a major attack on Russia's largest military base in Dagestan. People in the republic split between independence advocates and central government allies which moved to quell the opposite powers. (Al Matridi 1998:100).

President Boris Yeltsin's term

Until he was upgraded by Gorbatchev in 1986, Yeltsin had no experience in public administration, he spent his career as a civil engineer. Despite he was introduced to senior-level soviets by Gorbatchev, Yeltsin lost his position as a first secretary in the Moscow committee only after clashes between the two. The reason for the disagreement was Yeltsin's hastiness to achieve outcomes

while Gorbatchev described that as "immaturity and lack of responsibility".
With the new People's Assembly established, Yeltsin had the chance to re-enter political life, he was elected as an Assembly member and later succeeded in gaining a seat in the Supreme Soviet of Russia. He started criticizing Gorbatchev, the political office, the army, and declared opposition to the methods of communism to control society and economy. On the other side, Gorbachev led a campaign against Yeltsin. With his falling publicity, the campaign had negative results, it reinforced Yeltsin's position who declared the need for a new system, a socialist in essence but can absorb the western democratic achievements that engrossed Yeltsin in his visit to the USA. (Hussein, 2015: 212)
On the personal level, Yeltsin had a severe struggle with his heart disease, he had five heart attacks, walking and balance difficulties, and major challenges in focus and comprehension. This affected his political life. Since his election in June 1991, he had multiple alcohol-related health problems that withheld him from public appearance and affected his decision-making ability. Yeltsin took a series of inept decisions including the dismissal of four ministers within less than two years. Such random actions coming from an ill but power-obsessed president increased public mistrust in the governing regime. (Al Asfahani, 1999:210)
During Yeltsin's term, Russia found itself in a vortex of crises, the internal situations were irresolvable by the political decision-maker, internal deterioration aggravated on various levels, mainly characterized by:

1- Unstable internal political situation: Yeltsin used all possible means to weaken the central power and to abduct its constitutional powers, which lead to angry and negative reactions on both internal and external levels. Narcissistic and lacking any traits of a responsible statesperson, Yeltsin revealed the gambling nature of himself and his close circle of trustees. (Alkhuli, 1993: 65). Despite his low popularity, which almost reached zero, and the high expectations that he would quit politics due to his health issues Yeltsin declared his intention to run for another presidency in 1996. Media and the Oligarch played a major role in Yeltsin's campaign, of which he won in the second round. In the summer of 1996 the consultative political council was established. The council contained leaders from the legislative and executive powers and the nature of the relationship between the two powers changed into a cooperative nature. At the beginning of 1998, the council consisted of the big four; the President, Prime minister, Head of the Duma, and the Head of the Federal Assembly. In March 1997 Yeltsin declared the creation of a new government under the slogan " Support the Reform". His main goal was to avoid the constant confrontation with the Duma. (Al Asfahani , 1997: 156).

   Yeltsin's family gained an increasing influence in the presidential circle. By late 1997 Yeltsin's daughter Tatyana, the head of Presidential Administration Valentin Yumashev, the military chief of staff Alexander Voloshin in addition to Boris Berezovsky and Roman Abramovich from the oligarch were the real rulers of the Kremlin during the late nineties, with an exaggerated estimation of their importance compared to their real capacities. On 23 March 1998, a new crisis started between Yeltsin and the Duma triggered by Yeltsin's

decision to dismiss Chernomyrdin, the head of the government, and assigning the young Kirinko in his place. Yeltsin justified his decision by his frustration by the failure to commit to the ministerial program and the failure of the ministers to limit the delays in salaries and wages. The parliament rejected the new candidate, however, after Yeltsin threatened to dissolve the Duma, it approved Kirnko's nomination. (Hussien, 2015: 218).
Later, Yeltsin brought Chernomerdin back after Krinko failed to pull the country from the economic crisis. The opposition gained more power after the deterioration of the economy. The confrontation was this time won by the legislative power. The first renunciation by the executive power was made when Chernomerdin suggested building a coalition government hoping that the participation of the communists will guarantee him the majority of the seats. With the insistence of the opposition, new names were suggested, and eventually, Primakov, the former foreign minister, built a professional government that is distant from political affiliations. This government managed to give some hope to pull Russia from the economic crisis. (Qubailat, 2018: 169).
The political crisis gave the efficacy to the prime minister's position for the first time, after it was a mere implementer of the presidential orders. With a stated reason of slow economic reform, Yeltsin tried to regain his power by dismissing Primakov's 9 months old government.

The opposition in the parliament prepared five charges, of which one, in case proven, was sufficient to dismiss Yeltsin from his position; the dismantling the Soviet Union, the military assault on the parliament, destroying the Russian military powers, the extermination of the Russian people, and the war in Chechnya. Eventually, all these charges never came to light due to the secret negotiations between Yeltsin and members of the parliament. Yeltsin became more isolated and lost support from the parties and the government. He started his political game by objecting to the existing political decision, followed by negotiation and compromise with repeated threats to dissolve the Duma and run new elections, eventually leading the opposition to approve the presidential decision. (Al Asfahani, 1998: 244).

2- Economic collapse, Reform Program (Shock Therapy): Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, Yeltsin suggested his new program about economic reform. Underlining the food crisis, the collapse of the monitory system, and the deregulation of prices, he announced the end of the short steps approach towards development. Yeltsin's suggestions were welcomed, Russians were struggling under poverty – 55% were under the poverty level- and production dropped twice lower than its level during the Soviet period. Russia adopted the western "Shock Therapy" project, which was implemented by the Minister of Finance Yegor Gaidar and had the liberation of prices in its core. The government, by following the advice from western counsellors and international organizations, tried to build an American-style economy. As expected, the idea failed and a new Russian Capitalism, different from post-communist states and western capitalism, emerged. (Gray 2000:187). With the deterioration of the crisis, the

International Monetary Fund objected to provide any loans to Russia which became unable to pay salaries to employees and workers. (Abdullatif, 2008:240). Russia was facing difficult reality, 3% of Oligarch controlled its weak economy, and after years of implementing reform projects imported from the west without enough adaptation to the Russian reality, Russia drowned in severe financial and economic crisis. The state lost 30% of the virtual gross domestic product (GDP), the inflation reached 2000%, prices of goods increased 1700 times, consequently, 80% of the Russians had no savings of any type, the state was not able to pay salaries to its staff, the military, teachers nor scientists. Between 65 to 67 million citizens had their salaries and entitlements delayed, the capital flight reached 150 billion US dollars between 1992 and 1999. The consequences of the collapse of the Soviet economy were severe, debts accumulated to 240 billion dollars and the interest reached 40% of the GDP, uncontrolled loans, interest accumulation, and the growing need for the external world led to increased import of goods which reached 85% of the total food market and 94% of the industrial products. These radical changes dismantled the services of the state, the majority of the population fell into poverty – about 45 million citizens- and a quarter of the whole population received less than 70 dollars per month. The professional and middle classes disappeared, birth rates and life expectancy dropped severely and organized crime flourished. (Gray, 2000:204).

3- Mafia and organized crime: The organized crime spread across the country, three quarters of the total banks and institutes that were privatized were forced to pay 10 to 20 % of its income to the Mafia. While most of the speculations are not accurate, it is safe to say that the majority of the Russian economy is a black one. The estimates of mafia income reached 40% of the Russian GDP, almost 40% of new business projects started from mafia controlled capitals. During the first half of 1995, kidnapping increased by 100%, armed assaults 600%, and contract killing became a familiar practice. According to reports from the Ministry of Interior, 150 Mafia organization control between 35 to 40 thousand institutes and 400 banks. (Hussein 2015:244).

4- The military industries community: with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the world's largest military industries community was about to collapse. Gangs found a thrifty environment and started to search the leftovers. According to Handman "after six months of the collapse of the Soviet Union, defence-related requests dropped more than 40% and 350 thousand Russians lost their jobs. In Ekaterinburg, where a quarter of the labour force existed, local gangs were the main customers that bought bombs and rocket batteries that previously were state properties. Profits from the black market provided political support and international connections necessary to market strategic raw materials, minerals, and weapons". In light of Geydar's policies, purchases of arms dropped 70%, and by 1993 the total military industry in Russia dropped to half. This was not necessarily a reflection of transforming the military industry into a civil one, it was rather a genuine decrease in the economic activity of the military industries community. (Gray 2000: 219).

It is safe to say that Yeltsin exaggerated in his stride towards the capital world neglecting the necessity to transfer gradually from communism to a market economy. Consequently, his period was a series of political and economic crises that decreased his popularity and led to his voluntary resignation. Yeltsin was pushed to resign by his trust circle and not by the public, he recommended Putin to succeed him in a manner that displayed a continuation to his abrupt decision making approach. (Al Asfahani, 2000: 145).

3.2 The political situation in Putin's era:

Upon his assignment as prime minister, the main goal Putin tried to achieve was gaining central control over Russian regions and territories. Without the central power, Putin's promises to enhance the economy and to enter the 21st century with a strong Russia would have failed. He circled himself by old friends from the security apparatus later known as "Silovikis". They were either officers from the intelligence or security agencies that played a major role in establishing Putin's power due to their strict and disciplined nature, which they acquired during the security service. (Al Subah, 2017: 74).

Many observers believe that Russia needed strong leadership and a firm leader to control the deteriorating situation. On both official and public levels, the conditions for Putin's arrival already had existed. In August 1999 a big scandal of money laundry shock Russia, New York bank facilitated the smuggling of 4.2 billion US dollars, and accusations were made against officials in the Russian government. The Oligarchs were intimidated, many influential officials feared to lose a safe panel for escaping the country, the alternative was electing a strong leader who can protect them and their interests. The public fear, on the other hand, was provoked by the danger coming from the Caucasus. In August 1999, Chechen troops took benefit from the political turmoil and marched into the neighbouring republic of Dagestan aiming to establish an Islamic state. Some observers believe that the Russian leaders knew about this move and even fostered it. The need for a strong government that can provide security to its citizens had to be justified. A series of explosions that hit four apartment blocks in Russian cities was enough excuse for Putin to demonstrate his solidity and political strength. He used excessive power to defeat the Chechens with the excuse to guarantee the security of Russia. From their side, Russians found the desired persona in Putin, firm, assertive, slim, athletic with cold eyes replacing the old sick collapsing president. A Russian sociologist described the situation : "No sociologist had ever seen this, all fear emotions that were hidden for a long time has now surfaced and our hidden consciousness became revealed. Russians were longing to any new face that looked confident and strong." (Shiftova 2006: 24-26).

Putin's administration faced big challenges manifested by the Oligarch. During Yeltsin's administration, the Oligarch controlled almost everything in Russia; money, power, and resources. In the beginning, the Oligarch supported Putin believing he was the right security character that can seize new communist waves which developed after the series of failures Russia had faced. Everyone bet on Putin, he was the only person able to shape the right relationship

between the central power and those who controlled the country's fortunes. He was aware of the previous practice by Yeltsin of distributing the power and managed to establish a new system of "Legal Dictatorship", which enabled him to control all the official institutes. (Amara, 2015: 154). Putin designed criteria that ensured efficient central control of power, in 13 May 2000 he published a presidential decree restructuring the presidential representation institutes in the Russian regions, Russia became 7 Federal Districts equivalent to military regions, and each district was headed by a powerful presidential representative. (Al Sabah, 2017: 75).
Putin's idea was to regain control over the previously privatized energy sector. With the merger and acquisitions taken by GAZPROM, the government's shares multiplied. GAZPROM was considered the government's tool for implementing its oil policies and returning the state to its historic role in gas monopoly in the European Union. (Vladimir Putin, the man who restored the strength and prestige of Russia 2009: 14).
What had never been expected became the truth, Putin started confronting the Oligarch: "Russia will be ruled by the president and the government, not the Oligarch" he stated. Putin re-established the missing central power, enforced the rule of law, launched a massive attack on the Oligarch, and whoever exploited the economy during the transitional period.
As mentioned before, Chechen fighters attacked a group of villages inside the neighbouring Dagestan republic. Moscow retaliated fiercely. Starting the middle of Augustus 1999, after a series of bombing in Russian cities, Russia declared war in Chechnya. Putin followed a new approach, he gained the trust of the elite Chechen veterans and thereafter issued a new constitution for the small republic in March 2003. In the same year, Ahmed Kadyrov was elected as a president just to be assassinated later in 2004 by Chechen separatists. In 2007, Ramzan Kadyrov was elected as a new president. (Saleem, 2012: 65).

Putin's vision for socio-economic reconstruction:

In light of the previous circumstances, Putin as a prime minister in 1999, and as a president since 2000 - except the Medvedev presidency period- tried to regain the international status of Russia by adopting an active foreign policy. On the other level, Putin focused on the domestic arena trying to implement a wide reform that had its impact during the years 2000-2008 manifested by noticeable economic and political stability. (Khushaib, 2015: 57).
In the year 2000 Putin presented the fundamentals of the Russian state policies. Most of the Russian foreign and domestic policies will be the reflections of those fundamentals. It is reasonable to believe that Putin didn't have a clear vision about these fundamentals, however, they were formulated by time and became more conspicuous in the following campaigns and could assist in understanding the political transform that Putin had led. The fundamentals which Putin based on when he assumed power were:

1. Focusing on the domestic reform programs is a priority before any reforms in the foreign policies, any contradiction between both is settled in favour of the domestic objectives.

2. Gradually eliminate the consequences of the cold war of which Russia was dealt with as the defeated side. (Qalajieh, 2016:47)
3. The priorities in this phase are the Russian persona (identity), strong state (security), and efficient economy (the standard of living).
4. Building a bridge of trust with the voters through a program focused on the citizens and their relationship with new policies and how the outcomes of such policies will affect the future of the citizens. Putin also tried to adopt a medial and neutral program that helped to avoid any antagonism with political torrents or socio-economic orientations. He talked about market economics, liberalism, rights, and obligations that everybody must respect and abide by.
5. Putin believed that the main trends of the new century will not include ideology battels, it will rather be wide competitions for better lives and national affluence.
6. The program aimed to rebuild the state structure through rebuilding the economic, social, judicial, and political institutions without making any promises before winning the campaign.
7. The motto for Putin's campaign was " For a Decent Life" which fulfilled the Russian citizens' needs for security and dignity.
8. The duration of the program was set to 15 years before any tangible results would be noticed, the comparison between the Russian state and western models like the USA and the UK was always the motive and the target for the program, as it was not a mere plan to surpass the crisis.
9. Putin mobilized the public and all state resources around a group of unified strategies.
10. Democracy was not a core issue, this can be referred to as urgent priorities during that period which necessitates a great interference by the state to combat organized crime, Mafias, terrorism, and the state of panic that overwhelmed the domestic arena in the last two decades.
11. International relationships were also marginalized, as mentioned before, all efforts were invested in the domestic level, which led some analysts to describe it as the beginning of political isolation (Hussien,2015: 263).

To achieve his vision, Putin adopted the following group of policies:

1- Building a strong and dominating central governing system. Since day one, Putin paid little attention to the nature of means that helped him to establish his power, war in Chechnya in 1999 helped in retrieving a powerful image of the state, a good example of his techniques was launching wide economic reforms under the supervision of the state. To legitimize his growing powers, he innovated a matchless concept of democracy "Democracy is the dictatorship of the law, the more powerful in the state, the freer the citizens can feel" (Critics of Putin, Russian democracy under threat, 2003:33).

Putin believed that the lack of internal political stability is referred to as the absence of controlling power. Building on this approach he was able

to earn additional powers, especially after the elections of 1999. Putin profited from the retreat of opposition powers, he won the support of United Russia, the major party which allied with the Patriots of Russia, and became the symbol of all powers (Boulmakahil, 2009:156).

As mentioned earlier, Putin surrounded himself by officers from the law enforcement and intelligence. Sergei Ivanov (Head of FSB) along with other high ranking intelligence officers were controlling the arms sale. This was an attempt from Putin to retrieve the prestige of the state, an idea approved by the majority of the officer he pulled to the surface. They all were aiming to terminate the influence of the financial Oligarch and their arms in the executive power and Kremlin. (Rabahi, 2014:56).

2- Obtaining further presidential powers to implement reform plans. In the year 2001, Putin suggested a bundle of draft laws in an important speech he gave before Duma. The laws included suggested reforms in the judiciary, agriculture, pension system, taxation, commerce, and new labour law. That appeared as a revolution, however, to guarantee the success of these laws, Putin needed to expand his presidential powers again. First, he revied the trust between the parliament and the presidency systems, therefore eliminating the political crisis. His power as a president didn't withdraw, a fact that was obvious when both sides agreed to peacefully approve the state budgetary. Duma and the government lodged into a pacific synchronized pattern which led to a tranquil political field. By the time, Putin became increasingly able to establish a hierarchical system headed by the president. Orders flew from top to bottom in a way that minimized the need for a parliament, a genuine opposition, a multiparty system, or free media. Putin enjoyed all the powers he needed. (Khushaib, 2015: 60).

On another level, Putin minimized the powers in the hands of regions' governors. His objective was to transform such into tools of non-questionable support. He amended the election system, minimizing the role of governors. Russia became divided into seven federal regions after the amendments of May 2000. The central power became stronger than local leaders and president representatives of which five were from Putin's closest circle, were assigned as heads of these regions. To control Duma in the elections to come (2003), Putin supported the alliance between parties, even small ones, so the Kremlin adopted various small parties that merged under the alliance of United Russia. At the same time, right-wing parties failed to build their alliance or to unify their stance against pro-Kremlin parties. Right-wing parties lost all hopes to influence any constitutional amendments in favour of Vladimir Putin. (Boulmakahil, 2009: 158.)

3- Implementing the rule of law: Putin insisted on implementing this principle in his speech to the Russian public. Everyone must obey the state, no one is excluded, especially after many corrupted officials were proven to have foreign channels. The corrupted financial and industrial Oligarchs were put under the scope, and politicians and media were controlled. Infamous businessmen and officials fell under the law. In a bold step, Putin fired the head of Russia's iconic monopoly company,

Gazprom, and assigned his own man: Alexi Miller. Miller was a loyal person perfect for running the gas importer. Actually, without Gazprom, Putin's power was missing a crucial component.

Another example of Putin's concept of rule of law was the reaction against Russia's biggest corruption matter. Yukos, was a major oil and gas company headed by the Oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky, had all its senior officials arrested including Khodorkovsky in 2003. Khodorkovsky faced multiple counts of fraud. (Shiftsova, 2006: 236).

In this battle, Putin sought to distance businessmen from the ruling. He limited their influence and stopped their interference in Kremlin, terminating a practice that was the main feature during Yeltsin's period.

4- The moderate approach. Putin adopted this approach hoping to unify the domestic political powers. He marketed himself as an idol of moderate solutions, opening channels with various political powers; socialists, and nationalists without jeopardizing his ties with the right liberal political torrent. Putin succeeded in creating harmony between the presidency and the parliament and in establishing a status of political stability which was missing since the seventies. He was able to unify all political actors since he claimed his first presidency in the year 2000. Back then, he built a government that included socialists, reformers, and oppositionists which, as per the observers, represented a new phase of a massive fortune, pragmatism, and professionalism, all held by a powerful grip that is keen to deal with opposites. (Boulmakahil, 2009:62).

The elections in 2004 were the real test of Putin's public support. It was not a surprise to the observers that he won by 72% of the total voices. It was indeed a big victory on the opposition plot to boycott the elections, on the contrary, voters rushed into the election and in a clear manifestation of the political transformation headed by Putin, the participation percentages exceeded any previous ones. Putin's return to power was another proof of this political transform. (Shadi, 2013: 174).

Political transformation in Russia (Guided democracy)

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the west, headed by the USA supported the emergence of the Russian Federation. The hope was to transform Russia into a democratic model similar to the western one. This hope was never fulfilled.

Lilia Shevtsova, a political researcher, dates the distortion in the democratic pathway to the year 1993, even before Putin was given power. For Shevtsova the constitutional crisis of 1993 marked the start of this distortion which reached its peak when Yeltsin was re-elected in 1996. The same attempts to copy the western style of democracy became a fraud during Putin's period. (Shevtsova, 2006:484)

The Putin-invented political system is characterized by guided democracy, a concept that is based on a paramount leader or leader of the nation. This system can give some freedoms and rights that are mainly to show to the

global public opinion or for domestic use when addressing the opposition, which the system constantly works to weaken.
With parliamentary and presidential elections, constitution, and limited freedom of expression on the surface, the guided democracy covers itself with some aspects from the modern constitutional democracy. However, the real success of powers through transparent and impartial elections remain absent, the real mechanism of power transfer, especially for the role of the president, is a circulation within a small group which dominates the whole state. (Shadi, 2012: 13).
For example, it was obvious that the regime was facing a problem in finding Putin's alternative during the 2008 elections. Though not fully blessed by Putin's close circle, Medvedev was the selected person for this role. This indicated that the current power has no intention to face many risks, democracy as such had to be tailored in a special way that any state, Russia in this instance, can accept what responds to its peculiarities and reject what might harm its cultural, national or historic identity (Qalajyeh, 2016:62)
Most of the states that resulted from the dissolving of the Soviet Union witnessed similar phases of guided democracy and monocracy. These phases included a struggle with legislative power, dissolving the dissident parliaments, drafting constitutions that bestow ultimate powers to the president and his entourage, and above all was the establishment of a party that is completely loyal to the president. (Shadi, 2012: 53).
Despite the above, some Russian researchers believe that the guided democracy can create, at a certain stage, the necessary circumstances to transfer into a real democracy that deliberates power through transparent and impartial elections. (Shevtsova, 2006:424).

Summary of chapter 3:

The study in this chapter tackled the first transformation in the Russian state after the fall of the Soviet Union. This transformation was represented by the presidency of Boris Yeltsin. It focused on the factors and reasons that influenced this critical period and how it was considered one of the most difficult ones. The chapter also focused on the transition of power between Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin being the second political transformation which we are still witnessing until this day. The chapter aimed to explain the impact of the development in political leadership on the transformation within the Russian state.

Chapter Four
Religious and ethnic minorities in the Russian Federation
Introduction:

Religious, ethnic, and linguistic diversity is a normal phenomenon in any society. The interaction between these components can result in one of two scenarios; dissolving into a unified body after developing a harmonized lifestyle between members of the society, or rejecting the concept of co-existence and harmony which, according to many studies, can provoke turmoil and clashes between society members.

Peaceful coexistence between religious, linguistic, or nationalistic components of the society is a source of social and cultural wealth. Many states succeeded to align between the concepts of equality and non-discrimination on one hand and national security on the other. Diversity was the source of violent nationalistic conflicts in some instances. That provoked oppressive measures by the state which its unity was jeopardized.

Aiming to identify its effects on the political transformations, this chapter will tackle the reality of ethnic and religious minorities in the political life of the deep state of the Russian Federation. The concept of the minority was deliberated in many studies and researches each form a certain perspective. Most studies approve the description of the minority as a numerically small group within the political entity of a state regardless of this group's political weight. (Bin Nwi,2010:10). Studying the minorities in the Russian Federation will enable the identification of the roles of these minorities, their level of effect, and the assumption that these roles and effects can increase when minorities become able to better identify their needs and lobby to achieve their interest within the Russian Federation. The main feature of minority roles is the variation of their nature among minorities. An observer can easily identify this variation between different minorities, and how the Russian state follows various approaches in dealing with them. Some minorities enjoy certain achievements and advantages while others don not, a global situation that is even represented in the USA. (Rashid, 2018:252)

Some minorities in the Russian Federation are both ethnic and religious such as Tatars. The Russian policies to change the demography of certain regions is one of the main challenges that people from minorities face.

The previous chapters focused on the prominent transforms in Russia, starting from socialism into the current system, by studying the factors, and outcomes of these transforms and their major influencing powers.

In a quick glance a person can notice the role of minorities in these transforms, the Chechen crisis, for example, was one main factor that helped to establish the powerful ruling of Vladimir Putin. The chapter will shed the light on some marginalized minorities, and explain the lack of their ability to form realistic and unified demands, it will also focus on their history to understand their future in the upcoming political stage.

4.1 A brief of the historic role of minorities in the Russian state:

The maps of Russia varied dramatically across history. Many of its current lands were annexed gradually over time. It maintained a state of a continuous clash with other ethnicities that nowadays became minorities among the bigger Russia. These minorities were sometimes in a state of war against Tsarist Russia and were allies in some instances to overcome the third party. Minorities with a history of conflict with the Russian state had that history as the main factor that determined how the Russian Federation deals with them in the meantime. Muslim Tatars subjugated what was known as The Grand Duchy of Moscow in the year 1257. The Slavic princes were forced to pay tribute to the Golden Horde headed by Baraka Khan, they were also forced to give their oath of obedience and loyalty to the Supreme Khan. In 922, 66 years before adopting Christianity by Kievian Russ, Islam was the religion of the state of Volga Bulgaria (including the Duchy of Moscow) which is one of the countries inside current Russia. The dominance of Tatar ended in 1547 when Evan the 4th (the Terrible), who was the first to bear the title of Tsar, occupied Kazan, and Astrakhan Khanates. The lands of the Tatars in the Volga basin and Kazan became under Russian rule. (Barzaj, 1987:31).
With the occupation of Kazan Khanate, Russia became close to the North Caucasus, and in confrontation with the Crimean Khanate (Crimean Tatar), an ally to the Ottoman Empire. In the North Caucasus, the dominance of the Kabardian/ Circassian princedom was noticeable. Being in a state of war with the Crimean Khanate itself, Tsarist Russia sought an alliance with the Kabardian princedom. Kabardains were not only the largest Circassian tribe in the middle of the sixteenth century, but they were also the dominant power on the ground and defeated the Mongols headed by Khan Qasim (a mutual enemy with the Russian state) in 1532. As a result of this victory, Kabardians occupied Astrakhan and assigned a loyal Tatar governor. Several years later, the first Russian-Kabardian treaty was signed in 1557, followed by another one in 1588. These treaties were not for seeking protection nor subordination but were to guarantee military alliance against the Crimean Tatars and the Ottoman Empire. In light of this alliance, forces from Kardian Princedom supported their Russian allies in their war against Poland in 1660. In the year 1708, Kabardian Princedom defeated the Crimean Tatars in the battle of Kanjal. Later in 1739, one of the main articles in the Belgrad treaty was recognizing the independence of the state of Kabarda, however, the disagreements inside Kabarda opened the door for Russia to dominate it in 1840. The rest of Circassia was subjugated in 1864 after a long war that started in 1763. Russia occupied the Crimean Khanate in 1774 and was able to occupy the eastern part of North

Caucasus after a long war that ended with Shamil surrender in 1859 (Barzaj, 1987: 77)

After its success to assimilate several nations and ethnicities, the Russian target had always been to accommodate and dissolve these minorities within its Tsardom. Muslims were given freedom to a certain extent. In 1773, during Ykatrina's reign, the "Manuscript of Religious Tolerance" was issued, and for the first time in its history, the Muslim minority in Russia started to formulate its spiritual reference. The first religious administration was established in Ova then in Ureinburg under the name "The Association of the Mohammadian Spiritual Law". To maintain loyalty towards the Russian Tsardom, it was common to recruit the sons of ethnic leaders in the army. Shamil's son, Jamaluddin became a general in the Russian army, in a practice that displays not the human nature of the Tsar, but the political stance to avoid any unnecessary clashes that may jeopardize the state.(Allatibov, 2007:139). In other regions "Russification"[1] was the solution to absorb and merge the ethnic minorities. Through deportation and manipulation of demography, Russia converted many ethnic populations into minorities. Circassians, Chechens, and Dagestanis were deported from their regions in the North Caucasus and were substituted by the foreign Slavic Cossacks. Kabardian subjects like Balqars and Karachays were encouraged to revolt and pledge alliance to Tsarist Russia. (Alash, 1991:21). On another level, militias were created from minority people to divert their power into the Russian interest. The "Wild Division" or "The Mountaineers Division" which comprised of Kabardians and Chechens was assigned to protect Tsar Nicola I. (Richmond, 2010: 98). Another distinguished incident was bestowing "Yulaisv", a Bashkirian noble, the "Right of life", aright that was limited to Slavic princes, by Ykatrina II 1775. (Allatibov, 2007: 139), in addition to granting a status of "Noble" to many Circassian princes inside the Tsarist court like General Cherkaski Bikovich (from Circassian Beyqwa) who was the assistant commander to the Russian forces in the Caucasus.

On a third level, Russia forcefully converted Tatars, Chechens, and Circassians into Christianity and enforced Russian administrative systems such as the "Prestaviltsva" or the Higher Commissioner to rule the newly annexed regions. (Raif, 1994: 195).

On 22 January 1905, Russian masses marched to Tsar's winter palace demanding reform measures. Laborers had been on strike for a while and were marching peacefully when the Tsarist forces started a mass shooting. Hundreds were killed and wounded only to increase the influence and power of this revolutionary movement that was headed by "The Constitutional Party".

In February, Nicola approved the election of a parliament (Duma) that can provide him with advice. However, many riots erupted during that summer, with peasants and soldiers creating the majority of the rebels. These riots had among other reasons the opposition of the war with Japan. A war that broke in 1904 after a Japanese attack on Russian ships and ended in September 1905 after a Russian defeat. (Trutski, 1978: 16).

The Russian revolution erupted in February 1917. The public demanded that the Duma takes power. On 12 March 1971 Tsikhidzi was elected as the head of

[1] This means applying the Russian character to names and places at the expense of other languages and cultures. names to

the newly created Domestic Authority, and Kirinski assumed its deputy role. On 15 March 1917, Nicola abdicated to his brother, Grand Duke Mikhail who despite having high popularity refused the throne after advice from the Duma. A provisional government was formed. On 14 September 1917, the Russian Republic headed by Kirnski was established, only to vanish in the following October after the eruption of the Socialist Revolution. The Russian civil war started. (Bino, 1997:63). Before the Socialist revolution, minorities played a big role in instigation against the Tsarist reign. In the years 1905-1907, a group of Circassian rebels controlled Nalchik before it was destroyed by the Tsarist forces. Punitive expeditions were undertaken to suppress any further insurgency. Despite their previous participation, Kabardian and Chechen battalions in Terek Division disobeyed orders to be dispatched to the Russian – Japanese front (Krinko, Bizawgolni, 2011: 35). On 11 May 1918, the independence of The North Caucasus Republic was announced. The republic included regions from Chechnya, Dagestan, Abkhazia, Circassia, Ossetia, and Ingushetia. This provoked the Russian Red Army to attack North Caucasus in 1919 and terminate the newly established republic. (Bino, 1997,169).
The prosecution and efforts to distance minorities from their religions continued since the Bolshevik Revolution and until Gorbachev assumed power. Socialism oppressed all religions, and Muslims suffered pursuits to the extent that mosques were transformed into markets, clubs, and even animal barns. This policy changed gradually when the Great Patriot War against the Nazis started. Due to the surrounding danger, the authorities were compelled to revise their attitude towards religious minorities. This facilitated the restructuring of the religious institutions and the retrieval of its wasted prestige. During 1943 and 1944, the roles of Muslim Muftis were revived in Dagestan, Transcaucasia (Baku), central Asia, and Kazakhstan. Religious people were even given some privileges including the exemption from military service. (Al Janabi, 2003:1989).
The policy in the North Caucasus was built on mixing the ethnic groups. In the borders drawn for Kabardno- Balkaria, Karachevo- Cherkessia, and Adygeya the Circassians were dispersed between three republics while ensuring to mix other ethnic groups between them. Despite being one nation, Kabardians and Adygha were not included in one administrative entity. The policy of divide and conquer and the ability to instigate ethnicities against each other to maintain a central power in Moscow were truly taken into consideration when the borders of the three republics were drawn. (Bino, 2002:22).

The socialist authorities tried to lobby with the minorities during the Nazi invasion in North Caucasus. The results of that invasion varied among the ethnic groups. Some of them supported the Soviet struggle against the Nazis while others supported the invaders, a crime of treason that had to be punished after defeating the Nazis. The concept of traitor nations became widely used in Russian regions. In the year 1942 Chechnya and Circassia fell for the Nazis. (Natkhu, 2006: 461).
The aforementioned difference in the approaches towards different minorities in Russia lead to various attitudes towards the Nazi invasion. Some of these minorities faced catastrophic consequences as a result of their stance. Some Muslims supported the invasion based on the promises they received from the

Nazis. They were impressed by the Independent Islamic state that was given to the Karachays in 1942 after the red army withdrew from Crimea and the Caucasus. Muslims in the Caucasus established another state that was controlled by religious leaders and included Chechnya and Ingushetia. (Krinko, Pizaogolni, 2011:87).

Chechens were promised to have their independent state after the Nazis would defeat the red army, a promise that encouraged some Chechens to support the Germans. Chechens were later accused of treason and were deported almost entirely to remote areas in Kazakhstan and Kyrgistan in the year 1944. In 1957 The Soviet authorities issued the Rehabilitation Law that acquitted Chechens, Karachays, Balkars from supporting Nazis during the Stalin era. The law reaffirmed their patriotism, apologized for the disciplinary measures by paying compensations, and considering these measures as oppressive and arbitrary. (Bino, 1997: 230).

On another level, the National Committee for the Karachays was established and announced its independence from the Soviet Union. The committee organized a massive reception for the Nazis in Keslofodsk in the Kabardian regions to revenge the historic Kabardian dominance and to gain independence from the Soviet Union. The committee signed an agreement with the Nazis that ensured establishing a state for the Karachays and Blakars under the Nazi protection on the Kabardian soil. The declaration that followed this agreement included "after liberating the lands of Karachays and Balkars by the assistance of the undefeated German army, the nation of Karachay and Balkar, who have one homeland, one language, the same morals and ethics, and the same way of life expresses its desire to unite in a sole political entity under the protection of the great German people." The committee recruited groups from Balkars and Karachay and attacked the red army legions and the anti- Nazis Circassian cavalry forces. After the defeat of the Nazis, Balkars and Karachay faced the same destiny as Chechens and were deported to Central Asia. (Krinko, Pizaogolni, 2011:100).

On the other hand, based on antecedent military history between them and the Russians, forces from local cavaliers in Kabarda and Adygeya started to emerge. The Kardian cavalry battalion 115 chased the escaping Nazi forces until the outskirts of Rostov near Ukraine. With a total of 35 thousand cavaliers, this force managed to free several Jewish families from the German forces (Krinko, Pizaogolni, 2011:100). In Adygheya, 13 thousand cavaliers repelled the Nazis and sustained control over the red army fortifications. Thousands of Circassians fought on the fronts of Moscow, Leningrad, Stalingrad, Sevastopol, and Novorossisk and thousands of them were given medals of honour in return to their exceptional bravery. M. A Kerashiva wrote, "Adyghyans (Circassians) was one of three main ethnicities which provided heroes to protect the Soviet Union, the Caucasus will never be the same without Adygyans as Stalin said" (Natkhu, 2009: 465).

After the defeat of Circassians in 1846, Cossacks were settled in their lands. Cossacks dealt with the Germans as forces of liberation especially after the fall of Nalchik in 1942. The propaganda was that Cossacks were not Slavs but eastern Germanic Goths. Peter Kransov and Andre Scoro, militants from the Cosasks, supported the Nazis and helped in building the Cossak 7th regiment in

the Krasnodar region. The National Cossak movement was established to support the Nazi forces in the Caucasus. (Richmond, 2010: 167).
Minorities played main roles during critical periods of the Soviet Union. Those of them that supported the Naszis faced tragic consequences including deportation, while other minorities that resisted the invasion after the defeat of the red army and the upheaval of Cossacks were not treated in a better way. Kabardian lands for instance were annexed to Ossetia by the Soviets. Mozdok, one of the main Kabardian cities was annexed to North Ossetia, and vast areas were distributed between Cossacks while expanding the lands of Balkars and Karachays as means to control the Circassian influence in the Caucasus and to avoid reviving the classic rivalry between Circassians and Russians. This same approach was implemented also in the Republic of Tatarstan under the fear of increased anti- Russian nationalism.

4.2 The current status of minorities in the Russian Federation.

As mentioned earlier in the study, the total population in the Russian Federation is 143,500,000, with Slavs comprising the majority of 79.8% of the total 160 ethnicities. 73% of the Russian population lives in urban areas while 27% live in rural ones. Muslims in Russia are 25 million, and therefore create a percentage of 20% of the total population. Some Russian experts argue that in light of the current demographic growth, Islam will be the main religion in the country. In July 2008, the Russian Pravda published an article by Malanshko: "Islam to be Russia's number one religion by 2050". According to the article "Muslims in Russia have an exploding birth rate in Tatarstan, Chechnya, and Ingushetia of 6:1 when compared to birth rate if Slavic women." According to Malanshko, Muslims will be one-third of the Russian population by the middle of this century, and will probably be the majority by its end".
The monetary incentives didn't affect the birth rate among the Slavs. In a seminar titled (The lands of Bukhari and many unknown treasures) that took place in Cairo by the specialist on Commonwealth Countries Mohammad Salama, Salama said: "dozens of Russian academic studies proved that the (Islam Phenomenum) is expanding in the previous Soviet republics and by the year 2050, Russia will become an Islamic country. (Will Russia become an Islamic country by the middle of this century: http\\mubasher.aljazeera.net\news).
There is an approximate of 40 religious administrations for Muslims, of which the most influential are the ones located in the European part. These administrations fully adopt the Russian political directions, their activities and trends are under the direct supervision of the Russian state. None of the Russian leaders had ever visited Islamic worship sites during the Tsarist or the Soviet eras, in 2016 Putin patronized the opening of the Great Mosque in Moscow with the attendance of several international Islamic figures and heads of Islamic States (Putin opens the Great Mosque in Moscow with Abbas and Erdughan attending K 2016:17).
Based on the above, we can understand the important role that minorities in Russia are expected to take within the coming decade. These minorities

combine ethnicity and religion considering that Slavic Russians follow the Christian faith and the majority of other Russian nationals follow Islam.
As mentioned earlier, the Russian Federation consists of 83 federal entity: 22 republics of which most are autonomous and mainly include one ethnicity, 46 oblast, 9 krais, 4 autonomous regions, 2 federal cities (Moscow and Saint Petersburg), and recently 7 vast federal districts were added (4 in Europe and 3 in Asia) and are considered in a higher administrative level of the 83 sub-national entities.
According to article 68 of the Russian constitution, the republics have a unique right of adopting their language, however, the republics are similar to krais and oblasts in not having national sovereignty (article 3). The current republics of the Russian Federation are:

1. Adygea
2. Altai
3. Bashkortostan
4. Buryatia
5. Dagestan
6. Ingushetia
7. Kabardino-Balkaria
8. Kalmykia
9. Karachay-Cherkessia
10. Karelia
11. Komi
12. Mari El
13. Yakutia
14. North Ossetia–Alania
15. Tatarstan
16. Tuva
17. Udmurtia
18. Khakassia
19. Chechnya
20. Chuvashia

(Kesht 2009:48)
The autonomous Republic of Crimea was annexed in 2014.
The main objective of the new Russian system became to minimize the gap between Russia and the international community, particularly the west. Russia was in high need of aids from the global community to overcome the socio-economic challenges inherited from the Soviet Union. Adopting democracy, even theoretically, was one of Russia's low-cost paths to overcome its crisis, Yeltsin launched the democratic project only to retreat into a totalitarian system with a democratic shape. To suppress any ambitions of other nationalities, Russia appeased them by using the aforementioned federal parcelling, while the actual target was maintaining the "unity of the Russian soli", and the following step was tightening its grip even harder than before.
Currently, Muslims in the Russian Federation are distributed between the regions of Volga, Urals, Caucasus, Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Crimea, and West Siberia. They are concentrated in fourteen republics, one administrative district in two important regions; the north Caucasus in the southern borders and Volga and Urals in the centre of Russia. In the Caucasus, seven republics are inhabited with a majority of Muslims; Chechnya, Ingushetia, Dagestan, Kabardino- Balkaria, Karachevo- Cherkessia, and North Ossetia in addition to some scattered Circassian populations in Stavropol and Krasnodar.
Volga and Urals include six republics and one administrative district on the borders of Kazakhstan; Tatarstan, Bashkiria, Chuvash, Mordovia, Mari El, and Udmot in addition to the Urnburgh region.

The North Caucasus region is located in the southern borders of Russia adjacent to Georgia and Azerbaijan. The Caucasus is considered the link to Asia while Volga and Urals are located in the heart of the Russian Federation adjacent to the Kazakhstani borders. The Ural is a historically strategic passage that contains the Vulga river the life vein of central Russia. (Muslims in Russia, the dilemma of dialogue and separation, 2006:13).

Whether in the Volga- Ural region or the Caucasus, high-density Islamic population republics are considered of high value to the Russian Federation due to rich natural resources. The Caucasus is also Russia's only land way towards west Asia and the Middle East.

The significance of the Caucasus republics was less during the Soviet era. Located north to Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, these republics were actually inside the Union. Currently, the importance of the Caucasus republics increased after they became the southern international borders of Russia, not mention the agricultural potential and the ports on the Black sea and the oil-rich Caspian. (Adel, 2007:17).

While observing the republics with high Muslim demographics in the Volga – Ural region, especially the republic of Tatarstan, it is easy to conclude that these republics had strategic depth in Russian history. They are also one of Russia's most important regions for oil and gas production, the "Friendship pipeline" extends from Tatar lands into Eastern Europe. Tatar lands are also a vital source of minerals and agriculture, a fact that is obvious in the affluence of its population when compared with other Russian regions. Moreover, Tatarstan has a big reserve of water, wide forests and is considered an important industrial center in Russia.

It was after the Nazis attack that the Urals became Russia's industrial center there was a need to transfer all strategic industries from Moscow and Leningrad into the Ural implausible fort of Tatarstan.

Industries in the Volga basin flourished the economy in that region, heavy industries including planes, tanks, missiles, and aerospace in addition to petrochemicals and car manufacture are all localized in this area .On the agricultural level, the Republic of Bashkiria is considered Russias third highest producer grains. (Al Janabi,2003: 127).

When it comes to their notion of separation from the Russian Federation, Islamic Republics were influenced by many factors. The level of independence trends has various reasons for which the main is their historic relationship with the Russian state. It is a fact that the Russian leadership contained these demands in several ways.

Despite the fierce opposition from his entourage, whether the security personnel, main players in the market of natural resources, or liberal economics, Putin didn't receive any support from Russian Muslims when Russia joined the Islamic Cooperation Organization (The Islamic Conference back then). Since then, many statements highlighting the convergence with the Islamic world and the respect of indigenous Muslims were made, followed by a series of prominent events that were crowned by Russia's membership as an observer in the USISCO (an organization within the Islamic Cooperation Organization similar to the UNESCO). Following this event, leaders from Hamas

visited Moscow, a battalion from Chechnya was deployed in Lebanon after the war in 2006, and finally, Putin made a historic visit to Saudi Arabia.
Across all its history, Putin was the only Russian leader to officially declare that Russia was an "Islamic" country in addition to its other dimensions. Neither preceded by tsars nor Soviet secretaries, Putin went far by saying that: "Russian Muslims have their right to feel like part of the international Islamic nation, Russia has been and is still a geopolitical ally to Islam". During a program dedicated to communicating with the Russian public, Putin emphasized that Islam has always been a pillar of the Russian state, he added: "the power in Russia will always maintain our traditional Islam". Putin established the second historical foundation of the Islamic identity in Russia, the first was 250 years ago when Islam was given the title "The religion of Tolerance" during Tsarist Russia, meaning that it was the religion the state had to adapt and accept within its citizens, though it was before a religion that the state had to absorb within the majority of Christian followers. (Gurbanov and Mohammadov, 2012).
As mentioned earlier in this study, there have been several factors that pushed the minorities towards the independence option, these factors are:

- Economic factor: this has effectively influenced the nationalistic spirit in the Caucasus. The prevalence of administrative corruption, bribery, and economic vulnerability that negatively affected the public revenue escalated the public discontent. The swift transfer into the free market led to the abolition of many types of assistance that the community used to enjoy during the Soviet period. On the other hand, the high living standards in the Vulga Republics would have been the factor behind independence demands, these republics were able to separate and maintain their self-dependent economy.
- The influence of neighbouring Islamic renaissance: this resulted from the impact of other movements in central Asia and Afghanistan. The Islamic literature and ideas that spread in the adjacent Islamic countries started to spread within the Russian Muslims.
- The prevalence of independence culture after the Baltic republics, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine achieved their independence. (Bakeer,2005:10).

Accordingly, these factors can vary in their effect on the independence tendencies among nations, and that is due to:

- Association with Islam: The Islamic thoughts were associated with the demands for independence especially in the Caucasus. The re-emergence of these thoughts formed following the collapse of Socialism. The demands of independence and the manifestations of the Islamic renaissance are conspicuous in Chechnya, Dagestan, and Ingushetia (Aljanabi, 2003: 131) while the same factor pushes towards stability and deviation from the independence option in Tartarstan. The Islamic influence is lower in comparison to the nationalistic influence in the Republic of Kabardino Balkaria.

- Geographic location: this played the main role in the variation of independence trends, while the Volga region transformed from a marginal border region into a main region inside the Russian State, its significance resulted in a strong relationship with the central power. The remote Caucasus was dealt with negligence, which resulted in a civilized and cultural differentiation.
- Demography: the Russian policy ensures the presence of a high percentage of ethnic Slavs in the Russian republics and regions. This weakens the ethnic harmony and dawdles any demands for independence. Even for states that separated from the Russian Federation, this was a strong tool of dominance that was used in Eastern Ukraine and Crimea.
- Economic situation: Muslims in the Urals maintain a status of coexistence with the Russian state due to enjoying high welfare which does not encourage separate trends. (Adel, 2007: 34).
- The historic relationship between Russia and the ethnic groups: Russia reacted extremely to the Chechen attempt to separate, the attitude towards Tatarstan becomes less extreme, and the fear from separate trends among ethnicities varies depending on their historic relationship with Russia.

The following is a brief on the reality of the main ethnic republics in the Russian Federation:

- The Republic of Bashkiria (Beshkirstan): an autonomous republic within the Russian Federation, the name of the republic is derived from Bashkir one of the Turkic (Turan) nations, its capital is the city of Ova and is located in the southern part of the Urals. The republic is bordered by Tatarstan from the west, Cheliabesnk district from the east, and the districts of Berum and Sverdlovsk from the north. The area of the republic is 14947 square kilometres, with a total population of 4,060, 957 the Bashkir society includes several ethnic groups: Russians 36%, Bashkir 29.5%, Tatar 25.4%, Chuvash 8.7%, Mari 2.6%, Ukrainians 1.6%, and other ethnicities 2.7%. 38% of the population are Muslims and 25% are Christians. Bashkiria is one of the Russian Federation's oil production regions with a revenue of 60% from the whole state income. Heavy industries, energy, and minerals are on the top of the republic's resources. The republic has a large wealth of livestock and high-tech agriculture of grain and corn.

- The Republic of Tatarstan: with its important location on the western steppes of the Urals on the border between Europe and Asia, the area of the republic is 70000 square kilometres and has no borders with foreign countries. It is divided into 57 administrative units and has a unique location on the Volga River, the main vein in central Russia. Kazan, the capital, is Russia's third largest city after Moscow and St. Petersburg with a population of 4 million, 50% of which are Tatars (Total Tatar population in Russia is 7 million), 40% Russians, and 10% other ethnicities. The republic is an industrial centre that is ranked third after the Samara region and is among Russia's fastest-growing economies. The main resource in the

republic is oil, with an annual production of 32 million tons of crude oil. "Tat Oil" is Russia's sixth-largest oil company and the estimate of oil reserve in the republic is over a billion tons. The industrial income represents 30% of the GDP, mainly coming from the jet factory (Tupolev), cars (Lada-Fiat), and other heavy industries and textiles. (Murtada, 2017: 153).

- The Chechen Republic: One of the well-known republics in North Caucasus, bordered by Dagestan and Georgia from the south, Dagestan and Russia from the North, and North Ossetia and Ingushetia from the west. The republic's capital is Grozny, and its total area is 17,300 square kilometres with a population of 1,336,989. 70% of the republic's population are Chechens, while the rests are Russians and other ethnicities. Most Chechens are Muslims, and oil, natural gas, agriculture, and hydro energy are the republic’s main economic resources.

- The Republic of Dagestan: the total area of the republic is 50,300 square kilometres, its capital is Makhachkala and it is ranked first in the Russian Federation by the number of different ethnicities that inhabit the republic. The republic is inhabited by more than 60 nations and ethnic groups of which Avar is the largest ethnicity. The total number of Avars is 850,000, followed by Dargins 490,400, then the Qumoqs 431,700. Muslims are 90.6% of the total population. The republic is located in the furthest eastern part of the Caucasus bordered by the Caspian Sea from the east, Georgia, and Chechnya from the west, Kalmykia from the north, Stavropol Krai from the northwest, and Azerbaijan from the south. The main resource of Dagestan is agriculture of grains, grape, and other fruits. The agricultural sector developed recently after installing irrigation networks. The republic is also an industrial centre, mainly in extractive industries of oil and gas which are abundant in the Caspian Sea area, in addition to petrochemical industries, machinery, generating electricity, metallurgy, food industry, timber and handcrafts including carpet industry. The republics' total population is 2.5 million.

- The Republic of Ingushetia: an autonomous republic bordered by Georgia, North Ossetia, and Chechnya, with a total population of 500,000 mostly Ingush and about 90,000 Chechens all adhere to Islam. Muslim Ingushetians live side by side with 50,000 Russian Orthodox Christians. The main city in the republic is Magas, the current capital, Narzan after Malgobek, and Karabolak. Ingushetia was established in 1992 with an economy mainly dependant on agriculture and Tourism. (Matveeva, 1999: 65).

- The Republic of North Ossetia: located in the Caucasus, bordered by Chechnya and Ingushetia from the east, Kabardino- Balkaria from the west, Georgia from the South, and the Russian Federation from the North. The total area of Ingushetia is 8000 square kilometres with a population of 700,000. The republic's capital is Vladikavkaz, and the

majority of its population are Ossetians (200,000) all adhere to Islam. When other Muslim ethnicities are added to the summation of the Muslim population, they will make 53% of the total population. The economy depends on the industry, agriculture, and natural resources including Copper, Silver, Zinc, mineral water, and a large reserve of unexploited oil and natural gas. Ossetians willingly accepted the Russian control in 1874. (Sbetan, 2011: 230).

- The Republic of Kabardino- Balkaria: located in the middle of the North Caucasus, the capital is Nalchik and its total area is 12,500 square kilometres. The republics' total population is 1 million, 55% Kabardians, 9% Balkars, 30 Russians, and the remaining consists of a mixture of other ethnicities (Germans, Greeks, Ossetians, Ukrainians, and Georgians). The majority of the population are Muslims, followed by Christians and a minority of Jews. The republic's lands are fertile with a high abundance of water resources. The main agricultural products include grain, corn, and sunflower. The republic produces variety of fruits and vegetables in addition to livestock trade which includes cows, horses, and gazelle breeding. The mining industry is also a main resource of the republic, this includes diamond, Tungsten, and precious metals. Other industries are microchips, industrial and electrical equipment, confectionery, alcohol, and several other intermediate industries. The industry is the main resource of the economy with 60% of the republics' revenues. High industries, generating energy, mining, and machinery are also among the republics' main resources. The republic is a top destination for climbing athletes which triggered tourism development programs.

- The Republic of Adygheya: located in the North Caucasus and extends across the plains of the Kuban with a total area of 7800 square kilometres. Maykop is the republic's capital, and the total population of the republic is 450000 from more than 50 ethnic groups including Adyghe (Circassians), Ukrainians, Tatars, Armenians, Greeks. Adyghe (Circassians) create 24% of the total population all adhere to Islam. Good weather and fertile soil enable the production of more than 100 types of crops including tea which is cultivated in the far northern parts of the republic. The food industry is the main source of income, where products are exported to 17 foreign countries. The total area of the agricultural land is 250,000 hectares. Industrial production is equivalent to 57% of the republics' total revenues, and 43% of this revenue comes from agriculture. The republic has heavy industries, timber treatment for gas extraction and generating electricity, agricultural and food production, and manufacturing of industrial and medical equipment. Maykop became a highly strategic city after oil was discovered in 1911.

- The Republic of Karachevo- Cherkessia: located in North Caucasus with a total area of 14300 square kilometres and a population of 435700 of which 31% are Karachay, 42% Russians, 10% Kabardians (Circassians), 7% Abkhazians, 3% Nogay, 7% Ukrainians, and the rest are of Tatar, Greek

and Ossetian ethnicities. The capital is Cherkessk, and the republic exports coal, Copper, marble, and Tinco. Cherkessk is the industrial centre of the republic where 65% of all industries take place. Petrochemical industries are the largest followed by the food industry, machinery, and textile. In the sector of agriculture, crop cultivation, beetroot, sunflower, and potato are the main products in addition to cattle and horse breeding. Kabardian horse breeding in the republic is of cultural and economic importance. (Kesht, 2009: 62, 68).

- The Republic of Mordovia: the area of the republic is 25000 square kilometres, with a total population of one million of which 55% are Muslims. The republics' capital is Saransk.

- The republic of Udmurtia: the area of the republic is 42000 square kilometres, with a total population of one million and a half of which 55% are Muslims. The republics' capital is Izhevsk.

- The Republic of Mari El: the area of the republic is 24000 square kilometres, with a total population of one million of which 52% are Muslims. The republics' capital is Yoshkar-Ola.

- Orenburg Oblast: the area of the oblast is 112000 square kilometres, with a total population of 2.5 million comprised of Tatars, Russians and Ukrainians of which 52% are Muslims. The republics' capital is Orenburg city.

- The republic of Chuvashia: the area of the republic is 18000 square kilometres, with a total population of 2 million of which 60% are Muslims. Chuvash is a distinct ethnic group that does not belong to the Turkic group. The republic's capital is Cheboksary. (Murtada, 2017:170).

- The republic of Kalmykia: the republic is located in the southeast part of European Russia where Asia and Europe join. The total area of the republic is 76100 square kilometres and is surrounded by Volgograd Oblast, Astrakhan Oblast, the Republic of Dagestan, Stavropol Krai, and Rostov Oblast. The republic has access to the Caspian Sea and has a population of 300,000. It is considered the only republic in Europe that contains a Buddist population (Tibetian Buddhism). The republic's capital is Alista. Kalmyks separated from Mongols and migrated to the European part of Russia to inhabit the wide steppes where they mostly depend on cattle breeding. The republic accommodates twenty companies for oil and gas drilling in the continental shelf of the Caspian Sea. (Maksimov, 56, 44:2008).

- The Republic of Yakutia (Sakha): located in the northern east part of Siberia, more than 40% of its lands lay within the northern Arctic Circle. The total area of the republic is 3,083,523 square kilometres with a population of 959,875 inhabitants. The capital city is Yakutsk and is bordered by Chukotka Autonomous Okrug and Magadan Oblast from the east, Khabarovsk Krai from the south east, Irkutsk Oblast from the southwest, Krasnoyarsk Krai from the west, and the Laptev Sea and Eastern Siberian Sea from the north. The Yakutia (endonym: Sakha) is the largest Turkic population living in the far north of the globe. Besides the Yakutians, small indigenous groups from the Evenks and the Yukaghirs inhabit the republic. Yakutia is worldwide famous for the diamond, gold, and expensive fur. Gold was first discovered in the republic at the beginning of the 20th century and its production swiftly reached 6 tons annually. Nowadays, the production of gold is beyond 22 tons annually, which is found in the shape of small grains in rivers and their tributaries. Three new locations for gold mining were discovered in the 21st century. Yakutia is a big diamond producer, despite that it only started its production 50 years ago. The republic contains 150 locations for diamond excavations of which 13 are massive. The Russian "Alrosa" corporate, located in the town of Merni, runs the excavation and exports of the diamond with an annual value of the extracted stones of 1 billion US dollars. A portion of these stones are used in high-tech industries while the other is used for jewellery, as for fur, the number of fury animals in Taika forests enables the investment of their fur without controlled breeding, however, it remains a risk to over-hunt these animals as it can destabilize the ecological system in the area. Yakutia chose to breed these animals to avoid such risk. (Horvath,39,32:2006).
- The Republic of Buryatia: one of the Russian Federal subjects located in the Siberian region, an autonomous republic that extends across the eastern shores of Lake Baikal. The republic is bordered by Irkutsk Oblast, Tuva, Zabaykalsky Krai, and Mongolia. Buryatians are of Mongol ethnicity, and during the thirteenth century their lands were part of Genghis Khan's empire and they were among his invading forces. The first contact between Russians and Buryats was during the Russian settlement in Siberia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In 1666 Cossacks built a fortress on the bank of the Uda River which developed into the city of Ulan- Uda, the capital city of the republic. The economy in Buryatia depends on agricultural products; wheat, vegetables, potatoes, timber, leather, textile, and graphite. Other essential resources include hunting, fur, cattle, mining, food industry, and engineering. The famous Baikal Lake, one of the world's deepest lakes, contains the fifth freshwater reserve in the world. (Chakras,22:201).

- The history of the Jewish population in Russia dates back to the ninth century after the expansion of the Khazar kingdom in the Volga basin. Jews suffered during the ruling of Ivan the Terrible who was the first Russian ruler to deport them to eliminate any foreign elements that dealt in commerce in his country. In the year 1783, the government

recognized the Jewish group, the Jewish Rabbis, and their religious authorities, and Jews were considered a dynamic pioneer element that can be utilized in developing the industry and commerce based on their well-known capacities. During the Soviet period, Jews were given total rights equivalent to any other Russian citizen, the punishment for anti-Semitism crime could reach capital punishment. By the end of the eighties and beginning of the nineties, concurrently with the collapse of the Soviet Union, around 800,000 Jewish people migrated to Israel according to official sources. (Murtadha, 2017:252). The 180,000 Jews are currently spread all across the Russian Federation, mostly in The Jewish Autonomous Oblast, one of Russia's subjects in the level of the Administrative Region. The capital city of the oblast is Birobidzhan and is considered the world's first Jewish state since its establishment in 1934. Jews from all over the world flocked to the oblast which the Soviets bestowed to them to overcome their nationalist problem and to prepare them for the later transfer into the "Promised land". The oblast is located in the south-eastern part of Russia, bordered by China from the east, and has a population of 190,000 inhabitants from Jews, Muslims, and Christians from different ethnicities. Yiddish is the official language besides Russian, and the area of the Oblast is 36300 square kilometres which is close to that of Palestine (240,000 square kilometres). (Rumman, 2017:04).

Buddhism is the fourth religion recognized by the Russian state. It entered Russia from Mongolia and the Asian east. There are 30 Buddhist worship temples in Russia, and the official numbers of Buddhists is around 1 million spread across the Russian land with a high percentage in the republics of Kalmykia and Tuva-Altai. Russia accommodates the most ancient Buddhist temple in Europe`. (Buddhists celebrate the New Year in Russia K 2004: 28).

From the previous demonstration, we conclude that minorities in Russia are the main component of the system based on their rich mutual history and their locations in rich and strategic locations in the Federation. The interaction between the Russian state and minorities played a fundamental role in the past and will do in the future political transformations. In a quick comparison between the status of Tatarstan and Chechnya, we can find that the friendly relationship with Tartars resulted in more prosperous outcomes after their independence demands at the beginning of the nineties. Both sides had peaceful negotiations that lead to Tatarstan having wide authorities to run the resources of the autonomous republic internally. With the Chechens, the situation was the opposite, an armed conflict erupted and took thousands of lives. Despite what this comparison may indicate, it is not always correct to assume that the history of certain ethnicities with a hostile relationship with Russia will necessarily reflect on their current relationship. Some ethnic groups like Circassians in their republics were able to utilize previous experiences to build a better future. During its war with Chechnya, Russia repeatedly emphasized that its war was against terrorist groups rather than against Islam. Russia was concerned that these groups could spread their ideology in

Chechnya and the neighbouring Islamic Republics. On the other front, Chechens believed that their struggle against Russia was a fight against its continuous attempts to dominate the North Caucasus region since the late eighteenth century and across the nineteenth century. (Zaid, 2000:76).
Historically, the Russian policy has been complicating the ties with ethnic republics systematically. By manipulating the demographics in these republics, Russia has always prepared a strong pretext to use force under a legitimate cover.
The crisis in Crimea in 2014 was unique. It enabled Putin to assume the protection right of Russian-speaking citizens in Crimea and to annex the peninsula in a swift bald way to avoid a long-term war despite missing the international recognition of the Russian action. (Larabi, 2017: 51). After the annexation to Russia, Crimean inhabitants of Tatar ethnicity found themselves living in Russia rather than Ukraine. This triggers a question on the fate of the relationship between Crimean Tatars and their peers in the Republics of Tatarstan and Bashkiria, in light of Crimean Tatar disagreement of the Russian dominance, and the opportunity to transfer this attitude to Tatars in the Volga-Ural region as their rights and political gains within the new state has become far less. On another level, president Putin didn't refer to the protection of Tatars, Chechens, and Circassians in any speech, a matter that is deeply concerning in a state that identifies itself as multi-ethnic. The Russian expansion is continuing based on Russian identity. This attitude towards ethnic minorities triggers the fear of costly consequences with the growing idea among these ethnicities on their level of representation. For example, Russia seeks to substitute and enforce the Russian language at the expense of other ethnic languages, while simultaneously, it defends the Russian speaking inhabitants of Ukraine and demands there-enforcement of the Act of Languages. This act was in force at the time of pro-Russian Ukraine president Victor Yankovich and states that Russian is the second language in any district inside Ukraine with 20% of Russian ethnicity. It necessitates that Russian must be used in governmental bodies, institutes, and colleges. (Kuffman, 2017:46). This contradicts with the Russian policies inside Russia that theoretically ensure the rights of ethnic groups to protect their languages. The big difference in the rights enjoyed by Crimean Tartars under the Ukrainian authorities and the rights under the Russian state provoked them to demand applying "The demands of Russian minorities in the previous Soviet-era" on the Russian minorities and to avoid double standards when dealing with non-Russian ethnic groups. The convergence between Crimean Tatars and their peers in the Republic of Tatarstan was crowned at the International Tatar Conference in Turkey in 2015. (Kuffman, 2019: 49). The Russian state, in its efforts to protect Russians abroad, instigated many questions regarding the rights of minorities who are, so to speak, more eligible for its protection.

Summary of Chapter 4:

In this chapter, the study shed the light on the historic relationship between different ethnicities that create today's Russian Federation. These varying relationships formed the current unique ethnic situation and assisted to

understand the current roles of minorities within the Russian Federation. Either positively or negatively, many of the ethnic groups in Russia are still affected by historic relationships. The chapter also tackled the essential factors that govern the relationship between the Russian Federation and these minorities.

Chapter Five
The role of ethnic and religious minorities in the Russian Federation

Introduction:

The preamble of the Russian constitution states that "We, the multinational people of the Russian Federation, united by a common destiny on our land, asserting human rights and liberties, civil peace and accord, preserving the historic unity of the state, proceeding from the commonly recognized principles of equality and self-determination of the peoples honoring the memory of our ancestors, who have passed on to us love of and respect for

our homeland and faith in good and justice, reviving the sovereign statehood of Russia and asserting its immutable democratic foundations, striving to secure the wellbeing and prosperity of Russia and proceeding from a sense of responsibility for our homeland before the present and future generations, and being aware of ourselves as part of the world community, hereby approve the Constitution of the Russian Federation. (1993 Russian constitution and its amendments until 2014, 2017).

Through its preamble, the Russian constitution recognizes the multi-ethnic nature of the state. It is therefore inevitable that the rights and demands of this component of the state are met in light of the constitutional principles and international standards, particularly the agreements and treaties signed by the Russian state on top of which is the principle of the self- determination of people.

This chapter aims to demonstrate the mutual effects between the political elites of the ethnic minorities and the Russian leadership. As mentioned earlier in the third chapter, the role of minorities in shaping the political system in the Russian Federation was noticeable. The steps taken by President Putin to restructure the modern state of Russia were closely tightened to the demands of these minorities. The conflict in Chechnya was the first challenge faced by Putin's leadership. Chechen crisis started as minority issue with ethnic instigator and consequent religious shape. The variable of minorities was always of less attraction to researchers, always last to other political matters. It is necessary to study this variable, understand it, and explore its dimensions. The real problem between the state and its minorities is the reluctance from the state to respond to minorities' demands and ambitions. These demands can vary between minorities based on subjective and objective factors. With this variation, the tools and mechanisms used to achieve goals are also different. In this chapter, we will focus on the following levels:

- Integration: a status achieved when the differences between the majority and minority are eliminated. To reach that, a first step will be to recognize the minority in a way that rights and responsibilities are soundly practiced. The integration starts to shape between different ethnicities exchanging services and other types of interactions. This results in a new mutual culture. Virtually, integration failed on many occasions with reasons attached to the minorities themselves, or other regional or international factors like the crisis in the Spanish region of Catalonia. (Rashid, 18:141)
- Autonomy: within a confederation, the minorities are given a certain level of freedom to manage their affairs. The central authority remains in control of foreign policies and external affairs. A minority can enjoy some powers to identify its interests and to forge its plans. (Abdulbadie, 1993:164)
- Separation: in some cases, the minority group in a state realizes that its coexistence with other groups does not fulfill its demands, on the contrary, it creates a trend for separation which will affect the political stability in the state. Separation becomes of worse consequences when the minority has a natural extension into neighboring countries (In the

Russian model Toranic ethnicity represented in Tatars, Karachay, Bashkirs, and the state of Turkey). In such a case, there is no guarantee that separation is the best solution for containing the differences, and overcoming ethnic, religious, and cultural dissonance. On some occasions, the separation trend may be a result of the economic factor. Wealthy regions are more valuable to the central power like Tatarstan for Russia. (Al Aswad, 2003:50).

Minorities may use a variety of means to achieve their goals, some of which are violent and others can be peaceful, this is determined based on:

- The structure of the minority, the general behavior which is determined by ideological and intellectual frames.
- The general situation of the minority, the level of internal and external influence which determines to what extent this minority can maneuver the political system. (Al Azzawi, 2003:32).

As for the means, they can be divided into:

- Peaceful means: which can fulfil a certain level of rights, this includes all the legal activities that can take the form of parties or associations that advocate for the minorities' rights.
- Violent means: this includes several patterns:
    - ✓ Random violence that can develop to target state symbols in a try to affect the central power to make some compromises. In this case, the minority does not have a clear military or political structure.
    - ✓ Politically and militarily organized violence, which may lead to a centralized resistance inside a particular region.
    - ✓ An advanced level of political and military mobilization that enables armed activities at the widest range. (Bin Noi, 2010:33)

The Russian state is directly affected by the different means and objectives of minorities. This entails a role in the political transformations that have to be identified and utilized to predict the future political development. Minorities within the Russian Federation can found a consensus or a shape of legal alignment when the right moment comes. This chapter explores these future roles and policies.

1.5 The role of ethnic and religious minorities in the establishment of modern Russia and its leadership:

In 1991 Boris Yeltsin won the elections as an independent candidate after he resigned from the Socialist Party. He gained the heart of the public announcing that he will place Russia back in the civilized world and establish democracy according to the western model. In 1993, the new constitution was approved, which was considered the first step of transition between the Soviet and modern Russia. In the first few years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, neither the president nor the parliament had enough power to force one's will, both sides advocated for different types of ruling, while Yeltsin demanded a presidential republic with wide executive powers, the opposition demanded the establishment of a parliamentary system with the less powerful president. The result was the corrosion of the actual power of the state, the central power

became fragmented and unable to force its power over the regional governments. To overcome his opposition, Yeltsin used support from lobbyists, heads of ethnic republics, Oligarchs, bureaucrats, and the army. (Hussien, 2015:213). He also sought the support of political elites represented by both the heads and the citizens of Russian Oblasts and minorities. To achieve that he used the old Soviet attitude towards minorities. "Take from freedom the maximum you can get" was Yeltsin's motto that was widely accepted and convinced the minorities that a new dawn is about to come. Yeltsin had persistently attempted to gain support from the democratic west, which had among its main conditions to provide economic support to Russia: providing the ethnic minorities with social equality, abolishing the totalitarian system, and expanding democracy. The European Union highlighted these conditions in its session in Moscow 1991.

In his speech on 18 May 1994, at the 130th annual celebration of the end of the Russian- Caucasian war, Yeltsin addressed the Caucasian nations, admitted their struggle for their freedom and independence in the nineteenth century, and denounced the genocide committed by Tsarist Russia against the mountaineers in the Caucasus. Yeltsin indicated that the Russian empire, in its struggle with other nations, bares the biggest share of responsibility for the suffering of the Caucasian nations, he indicated that while many of them enjoy Russian citizenship, many were forced to leave their homelands, and with the modern human rights state of Russia, there is a readiness to acknowledge all proven inhumane practices including returning all the departed who left their lands. (Shanibbah, 1997:31).

This was the first message of its kind coming from the highest level of leadership in Russia that highlighted serious incidents related to nations that are part of the Russian state. It was a request for the minorities to support the new leadership, which demonstrates the importance of the support these minorities can have. Yeltsin, after the incidents in November 1993, controlled the parliament and arrested its head- the Chechen Ruslan Khasbulatov. Leftist and liberal parties became banned, pro-parliament journals were closed and Yeltsin took the decision to conduct a referendum on the new constitution on 12 November 1994 which gave the president more power. Russia emerged as a state headed by a president with far more powers than its parliament. (Iskander, 2011: 126). As a result of his policies which included collecting support from minorities, Yeltsin emerged as a victorious leader, surrounded by all segments of Russian society.

The new leadership headed by Yeltsin faced many challenges from the minorities despite their support during the clashes with the parliament the demands from the minorities had various responses from the Russian leadership on several matters including:

- The Chechen matter: The parliament of the Republic of Chechen-Ingush declared state independence in 1990. The newly-elected parliament and government emphasized the sovereignty of Chechnya in 1991. Unlike other minority republics, Chechnya refused to join the Russian Federation and refrained from signing the special agreement thereon. When the Soviet Union dissolved, Chechnya was neither legally nor one of the Union's former states. (Stas and others, 1996: 76). The

Chechen perception was that this Republic was not similar to Ukraine, the Baltic states, the Central Asian Republics, and even unlike other republics in the Caucasus (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan). The order to launch a military campaign against Chechnya was made in December 1994, however, Russia was brutally defeated and Yeltsin was forced to sign a peace treaty with the elected Chechen leader Aslan Maskhadov on 12 May 1997. (Alshirazi, 2002:54).

- The matter of Tatarstan Republic: Tatarstan declared its independence on 30 August 1990. Consequently, two trends disputed each other, the first, adopted by the nationalists, advocated for a fully independent sovereign state that can benefit from the distinguished economic situation and friendly ties with Russia. (Adel, 2007:49). The other trend advocated for autonomy but within the Russian federation and justified that by "realistic" reasons; being in the heart of the Russian Federation prohibits any actual independence while maintaining a connection to Russia will be profitable politically, technically, and on the military level. This trend is also considered the demographic factor. Tatarstan contains more than 20 ethnicities where Tatars are 50% and Russians are 40% of the total population, such demographics can affect any plans for Tatars. This factor convinced the central power in Kazan to deal rationally with the nationalism demands and the unity of the state. The Soviet policy of manipulating demographics was a decisive element to abort the calls for independence in Tatarstan. (Abdulhafith,2005: 64). Unlike in Chechnya, the matter was dealt with peacefully by the Russian side. The demands in the two republics varied in strength and stimulants, let alone the risk that can result from using power to suppress a republic with a high status like Tatarstan. After the dissolving of the Soviet Union, the Russians and the Tatars signed a memorandum of understanding that identified a new form of independence within the Russian federation. In February 1994, the memorandum was upgraded to be a treaty signed by both sides. The treaty ensured a reciprocal delegation of powers, and was considered a role model in the Russian relationship with other administrative subjects and regions under what became known as "The approach of Tatarstan". Many Russian analysts agree that such an approach not only limited the calls for independence in the Russian regions and ethnic republics, it also disrupted any future demands. (Murtada, 2017: 164)
- The Organization of the United People of Caucasus (Confederation of Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus): the organization captured much attention in the Caucasus and was widely supported by media. Many descriptions were given to the new organization, the local and federal authorities saw it as a threat to the Federation unity, an organization that incubates ethnic extremism, that tries to split the Caucasus from Russia, fuel the ethnic conflicts, instigate and expand the Russian Caucasian war. The organization was accused of creating illegal governmental committees (executive, judicial and legislative), and illegal trained militias ready to engage in war for gaining authority. The organization was announced as the second enemy to Russia after Djokhar Dudayev.

This organization was established on 3 November 1991 and included representatives from nationalist groups from Chechnya, Circassian republics, Ingushetia, Dagestan, and Ossetia. The objective was to find solutions for the accumulated problems and contradictions in the Caucasus. Yuri Shaniba, a Circassian from Kabarda, was elected as head of the organization. (Shaniba, 1997: 56). The organization assisted in establishing a military force that supported Abkhazia to confront the Georgian assault. The force that consisted mainly of Circassians and Chechens was headed by the Circassian Kabarday Sultan Suslanev who later took the position of the chief of staff of the Abkhazian army.

On 15 August 1992, Georgian forces marched into Abkhazia. On 21 August 1992, the confederation ordered arresting any Georgian within the borders of member republics. In September 1993, the Caucasian volunteers inflicted heavy casualties among the Georgians and finally succeeded to expel them from the Abkhazian territories. Accordingly, the Russian authorities started to persecute activists in the organization and members of the Kabardian People's Congress. Shaniba was arrested, crowds across the Caucasus, especially in Kabardino -Balkaria, marched the streets against the decision. The authorities tried to suppress protestors, but thousands of Kabardian Circassians continued holding a set-in opposite to the presidential palace in Nalchik. Blood shedding was inevitable after the Russians sent "OMON" forces to protect the symbols of its power, however, under the pressure of the persisting crowds, Shaniba was released and later joined the volunteers in Abkhazia. (Stas and others, 1994: 37).

Russia experienced several ethnic clashes after the Dissolution of the Soviet Union, even in republics with no Muslim majorities like Yakutia (Sakha). Many Russian Slavs were expelled from the Siberian republic. Similar incidents took place in the Republic of Tuva, when indigenous nationals, who created 40% of the total population attempted to evacuate the republic from Russian Slavs, despite following the same religion. Both attempts were brutally resisted and Russia re-assumed its control in the two republics. (Prina, 2016:91).

Yeltsin's presidency can be described as a period of domestic chaos especially in relation to the minorities' demands. The Russian authority succeeded in controlling most of the crises like the one that took place in Tatarstan by using the same approach that became the name of this precedent "The Tatarstan approach". However, it failed to control other matters, in Chechnya, it was dragged to a bitter conflict that resulted in a historic defeat where Russia was forced to sign a peace treaty and withdraw all of its forces from Chechnya.

The political situation changed radically after Putin assumed power. Putin took several important measures to re-establish modern Russia. The main measure was very relevant to Chechnya, in a clear example of employing a crisis to consolidate his power, and to win huge popularity within the Russian public. The Chechen crisis enabled Putin to subjugate political elites from ethnic republics and minimize their authorities in favour of the federal centre. After his re-election in 2000, Putin launched a group of measures that aimed to consolidate his authorities and increase his power against other components

of the Russian Federation. He terminated the separatist trends, subjugated oligarch and media, and controlled the election and party systems in the whole of Russia.

Many questions were raised before Putin's presidency (before inheriting the power from Yeltsin), the main of which was why Kremlin insisted that the new leader has to appear modern and powerful at the same time.

In August 1999, a group of Chechen fighters attacked the borders of adjacent Dagestan aiming to establish an Islamic state as per the Russian official media. (Ashirazi, 2002:78). The act was suspicious, why to happen at the time when Moscow was preparing for a transition of power? Why didn't Moscow attempt to stop the invasion? Why did the Russian ministries observe silently the obvious aggregation of fighters on the borders? And most importantly, why did the commanders of the armed forces withdraw the Russian military contingent located between Chechnya and Dagestan immediately before the invasion? The "Profile Magazine" asked: why did Chechnya move before the re-election of Yeltsin, and why is Dagestan involved now?

All of that was accompanied by a series of building bombings in Moscow and other Russian cities where 300 civilians were killed. Chechens were accused after the authorities couldn't find the terrorists, an act that raised many doubts about the involvement of Russian Secret Services. (Nasim, 2014: 81). Vladimir Putin launched the "Counter-Terrorism campaign in Chechnya" on 30 September 1999. Due to this campaign, despite the big losses among the Russian troops, and benefitting from the fear in the Russian community of repeated Chechen attacks, Putin was no more in a race to gain power. All he needed is to focus attention on the old-new enemy; the Chechens. Putin became on the top of the political structure, Yeltsin nominated him as a successor, and in 2000 he gained 53% of the total votes. (Nasim, 2014: 17). Putin settled the Chechen matter. Russia emerged victorious this time from the Chechen war, in November 2003 after new elections and a referendum on a new constitution that resulted in a suspicious 90% approval, Aslan Maskhadov was eliminated, Shamil Basayev's militias were dismantled and Ahmed Kadyrov, a Chechen veteran, left the fighters side and joined the Kremlin as a newly elected president of Chechnya. Kadyrov who was a supporter to Dudayev during the first war in Chechnya (1994- 1996)and remained a supporter to Maskhadov until the Chechen fighter headed by Basayev attacked Dagestan in 1999. (Imara, 2004: 16). It was obvious that Putin eliminated the option of negotiation with the Chechens despite the repeated suggestions by Maskhadov. The assassination of Kadyrov came only to complicate Putin's plans to settle the crisis in Chechnya. (Kadyrov: end of the journey, between Jihad and alliance with Russia, 2004:22). Putin rushed to receive Kadyrov's son, Ramzan during a swift visit to Chechnya. Shortly after the visit, Ramzan was given his father's legacy and assigned as the new president of Chechnya. In the years 2005 and 2006, with major assistance from Kadyrov and his allies, two devastating blows, the assassination of president Maskhadov and the operational leader Shamil Basayev, marked an end of all figures who worked with Dodayev for liberating Chechnya and separation from Russia. (Nasim 2016: 115).

The Russian model is a clear example of how to utilize a crisis that threatened the integrity of the Russian land by converting it into a successful tool within the Russian system. After being the main enemy of the Russian Federation, the Chechen minority became an indispensable ally.
After his father's assassination in 2004, Ramzan Kadyrov served as acting prime minister, and later prime minister of the Chechen government. In 2007, Ramzan Kadyrov was nominated by Putin for the role of president, the majority of the parliament voted for Kadyrov, and he became the president of Chechnya. (Malashinko, 2018: 57). The pro- Kadyrov fighters were absorbed within the Russian army. The Russians revived the ancient role of some minorities in the Tsarist Russian army by recruiting members of these minorities. The elite Chechen force, which became a main formation of the Russian army, played a role in supporting president Putin both on the internal and external levels. Members of the Chechen ethnicity were involved in a campaign of vague assassinations including that of the Russian opposition activist Boris Nemtsov in 2015. Unexpected consequences happened after arresting former members of the Chechen special forces concerning the case, doubts surrounded the Chechen president Kadyrov, and some members of the opposition accused him of the crime, where other observers started to since his role outside the borders of Chechnya. Russian opposition beholds Kadyrov as a tool in the hands of the Kremlin, he never hesitates to declare that he is just an infantry soldier who answers to Putin. His name always floated on the surface in the assassination of several journalists, rights activists, and Kremlin opponents like Politkovskaya and Borbova. Kadyrov had major roles in incidents outside Chechnya like the Georgian war in 2008, and Chechen forces in Ukraine. (The assassination of Nemtsov, lines of passion: http\\www.aljazeera.net\news) .
What attracts the attention to the Chechen model is the ability of Kadyrov, a local leader that has no extra jurisdiction in the Russian foreign affairs, to make statements, unlike his peers from heads of ethnic republics, that affects in a way or another the Russian foreign policies. In a highly sensitive matter, the annexation of Crimea and war in Ukraine, Kadyrov made several statements supporting the annexation and the deployment of Russian forces to Ukraine. (Russia repeats the mistakes and displays the signs of a failed state, 2014:28).
Putin succeeded in containing the Chechen matter, first by appearing as a strong leader whom the people were eager to have, then by utilizing the Chechen matter, founding an important role, not only on the domestic level but also on the international one. Despite the previous history of confrontation, the loyal to Moscow Chechen forces have a vital interest in preserving the power in the hands of Putin, a transition that resulted from a clever approach to handle the Chechen matter and demonstrates the role that minorities in Russia can play.
Measures were taken to guarantee a strong central power in Moscow, and a personal system of dominance for Putin's in the republics and regions of the Russian Federation. The center was empowered by subjugating the political elites, represented by the heads of regions and republics. The first step to achieving that administrative reform was taken in 2000 after Putin's election when he emphasized the centralization of the state and the power hierarchy. During Yeltsin's presidency, the control of Moscow was fragile, direct elections

in the republics and regions resulted in strong and influential leaders by the end of the 1990s who had the authority and economic power to confront the center.
Putin, on the other hand, merged all the power entities into a unified bureaucratic system that was easily controlled from the center. Directly after his inauguration in 2000, he issued a decree that divided the Russian Federation into seven federal districts each of which contains several components for the Russian Federation. He assigned personal representatives as heads of districts whom he brought from military, security, and intelligence apparatus (Siloviki). The goal was to undermine the power of the publicly elected governors and to limit the freedom of the governing elite in the Russian Federation. (Shovtsova, 2006: 124). Under this decree, the republics not only became part of the Russian land, but they also became part of an administrative division that answers directly to the president. The role of Putin's representatives was not merely to control and organize the republics, it was rather directly responsible for combating any threats to Kremlin's power, implement tasks that are directly assigned by the president, mobilizing administrative and financial resources for the benefit of the party during the elections, and select candidates for senior positions in the republics. According to Krishtanovskaya "based on the power hierarchy, Putin enjoys the loyalty from a group of "federal inspectors" who succeeded in establishing a network of loyal elites in all regions and republics with no exceptions". (Medvedev, 2018:96).

Putin was not even satisfied by this level of control, he ordered to revise all constitutions at the regions and republics and compare to which level these constitutions match the federal one. Next, he recreated the higher council of the parliament (the united council or the senate), which consisted in the beginning of the 1990s of representatives from regions and republics who were directly elected by the public. This was practiced in light of Yeltsin's 995 law that members of the council are rulers of the Federal subjects and heads of their legislative councils. In 2000, members of the council started to be assigned rather than elected. That year, Putin issued a law that organizes the process of assigning these members after approval from the central power in Kremlin, in a way that diminished the role of the council and put it under direct control by the Kremlin. (Shadi, 2013: 129).

After the Beslan Massacre in 2004, the Russian leadership returned to its approach of employing disasters and tragedies to serve its long term policies. A new presidential order (law) cancelled the old selection process of electing rulers of regions and republics and replaced it by direct nomination by the president. Putin justified his order by the need to guarantee a central power and a unified administrative system that acts for a unified entity. Under this law, the president can nominate whomever he deems fit to assume the position of a ruler in the federation, and all legislative councils are to endorse this Krimiln selected person. Putin also took the right to remove any ruler from office either temporarily or permanently. In 2003, he passed the law to the parliament, which became loyal to him after being controlled by United Russia Party, and

had it endorsed. Putin canceled the presidency period in the regions and republics, any unwanted president can be eliminated, and any loyal president can remain in authority for an unlimited period. The basic rule to select the heads of republics became the absolute loyalty to Putin, in exchange for a free hand in their republics. (Laquire, 2016:123).
The new seven districts' administration system enabled the devotion of personal interests, racism and in some instances, Putin representative went too far to the extent of trying to cancel a federal republic like Adyghaya.
In 1991 Adyghya officially declared its sovereignty, and by signing the federal agreement in 1992, it was recognized as a republic. The agreement was established in 1993 in the constitution of the Russian Federation, and in 1995 the Adyghayan constitution was officially adopted. The controversy in the republic pivoted around the demands of Adyghyan (Circassian) nationalists to attain a distinguished status of the Adyghyan minority and its language in light of the long-suffering from the 19th-century imperial invasion that changed the Adyghyans into a minority on their land. (Nefliasheva, 2006:6).
The question was raised about the current status of Adyghyans in comparison to the majority of the republic inhabitants. Adyghyans, who were marginalized since the Soviet Union, are struggling to achieve political and economic status in their republic that is in line with the Russian context and responsive to their natural rights. This was faced by the representative of the Russian Union in the southern region Demetri Kozak, a well-known anti- Circassian Cossak, who declared that Adyghaya must be dissolved and annexed to Krasnodar Krai. (Kasht, 2009: 98).

All Circassian organizations stood firmly against this suggestion and indicators of a new war in the Caucasus started to formulate. The struggle erupted between the newly elected Circassian president Hazrat Shoman and Putin's representative Dimitri Kozak and was only solved when the Russian government rescinded the plan. Circassians from their side demanded to annex more regions to the republic and to establish a road that links between Circassian territories. On 15 May 2006, the Russian journal (Kommersant) published an article entitled "Hazrat Shoman leaves victorious, Adygheya received confirmations not to be dissolute" (Barkhova 2006:16). Thus, one of the main crises that resulted from the new administrative divisions made by Putin was solved.
Muslims were not the only minority to face problems with the Russian center, Buddhists follow one of the four constitutionally recognized religions in the Russian Federation who had tensions in their relationship with Moscow. Buddhists are mainly located inside the aforementioned Republic of Kalmykia. The Republic of Buryatia has the second-largest Buddist population in the Federation and had witnessed clashes between Cossacks and Buryats in 2015 as a result of Cossacks' attempt to build a monument of one of their leaders in the capital city Ulan- Udi. On another confrontation with the Buddhists, Moscow sent large security troops to extinguish the violence that erupted between Chechen refugees and native Kalmyks after a Chechen murdered a local Buddist in Kalmykia. (Murtada, 2017: 71).

Minorities in Russia were divided between two choices, successful integration and therefore a peaceful co-existence, or separation and nationalist demands which were unsuccessful to fulfill. Despite that all separation movements from the Russian Federation failed, the Chechen minority enforced itself as a fundamental role player in the Russian policies.
Minorities had variable demands and different methods to achieve them, Russias response to these demands varied between peaceful to violent, but the only confirmed fact is that the internal reality in Russia cannot be fully comprehended if we disregard the role of minorities.

5.2 Challenges and demands of the ethnic and religious minorities in the Russian Federation:

After President Vladimir Putin assumed power, Russia's worst fear of state failure was overcome. This fearful obsession was surpassed after empowering current institutions and building new ones that were capable of surviving efficiently in a self-sufficient manner. This success was assured by establishing the state administrative and institutional capacities to develop fully functional policies, laws, and bylaws. (Fokoyama, 2007: 56).
Russia still faces multiple challenges that a person can detect when observing previous electoral programs since the year 2000 until 2017. The main challenges, which are relevant to ethnic and religious minorities are the relationship between the central authority and the federal subjects whether republics, territories, or local administrations in addition to security stability and demographics. (Iskandar, 2011: 449).
Before we tackle the challenges facing ethnic and religious minorities in the Russian Federation, it is essential to highlight the ideology of the ruling elite, which formulates the approaches in dealing with any future speculations on how to handle these challenges. Furthermore, the researcher cannot neglect the leverages and demands of the minorities which are to be judged by the current and historic relationship of that minority with Moscow. Mosca, the founder of the political elite theory, refers to the power and dominance of the elite to social and institutional reasons rather than mere psychological ones. The ruling class, as per Mosca, controls not only for possessing the necessary characteristics for leadership but due to a less observed and more important organized behaviour. This pattern of behaviour allows an elite minority to subdue the unorganized majority which lacks the motive, will, and harmonized way of action. (Paul and Billami, 2009: 139). As for the Russian model, the elite class consists of a group of technocrats with a security background headed by Vladimir Putin. Before such class was practically formulated, Russia had always accommodated the concept of a mono- ideological and organized elite, a notion that formulated the Russian public opinion in the political transformation. The real problem in the Russian transformation into a democracy during the nineties and until Putin assumed power was not the lack of quality in the electoral system. On the contrary to what many observers wish to promote, the actual problem is that the public favours a particular elite. In the nineties, Yeltsin and his entourage were publicly accepted based on the pro- liberalism propaganda, however, this had changed since Putin surrounded himself by his elite of security colleagues who by the name of

countering corruption and preventing anarchism set restrictions on democratic elections. This elite followed a policy that ensured the concentration of power and limiting the authorities of local leaders. The election system was amended to accommodate the changes in the new presidential system, which meant wider authorities in the hands of the president. By the time, new features of the elite started to develop, and new techniques were used to support the ruling policy, many of which are only found in the Russian Federation. By focusing on nationalistic values and historic pride, "Nazji" and "The Young Guards" were social bodies that contributed to the shaping process of the Russian public opinion. Other unique support mechanisms were creating military groups like the Chechen elite force and the Cossak National Guard, in addition to private military companies like "Wagner" which is equivalent to the American "Black Water". These armed groups had the main objective of protecting the ruling elite, in a framework of democracy which becomes known as "guided democracy". The challenges related to ethnic and religious minorities are tightly connected to the general guidelines of the ruling elite. With the high contrast in the government response to different minorities, there is a big possibility that the containable roles of these minorities will change into a haunting problem for the Russian policymaker. The minorities' reality can vary upon achieving their demands. Chechens, who were in armed conflict with the Russian centre, transformed under the new elite into the main pillar for stability utilizing form the military instrument that Moscow allowed them to possess. They even went further to guarantee the centre's continuum of support by exploiting any tensions at the regional and global levels. The demands of other minorities were converted into challenges confrontation with the ruling elite. Despite Putin's success to advance Russia and to treat most of the minorities' problems, new ones appeared on other fronts. In 2005, clashes erupted between protesters and Russian forces in Astrakhan in the Volga basin. In the same year, the ministry of the interior building in Kabardino- Balkaria was attacked by gunmen. In 2006, other clashes took place in the republic of Karelia.

Some polls indicated that the internal political system in Russia is facing a serious challenge, In a study conducted by "Livada center" in 2012 that aimed to identify the public enemies, 39% considered radicals from ethnic minorities are the true enemies of the Russian state. (Murtada, 2017: 132).

The attitude against minorities, which started in the mid-nineties, is affecting the democratic social awareness and is considered as deposits from the totalitarian regime, which developed after decades into a notion that "Russia is a multi-ethnic state that belongs to Russians under all human laws and international legal standards, and we, the Russians will not take any small nations into account". Ten years ago, this statement would seem out of context, however, it is a consequential explanation of the slogan "Russia for Russians", which was supported by the results of a poll conducted by Bashkirov Research Center where 34% of Russians were found to support that slogan in 2006. In 1989, 20% of Russians supported the same slogan. In 2001, after Putin assumed the presidency, the percentage was 50%. Based on the inputs of a 2006 poll, the outputs could not disregard the possibility of ethnic clashes. In Moscow and Saint Petersburg, 89% expect ethnic clashed to happen and 30%

believe that multi- ethnicity is harmful to the country. (Malashinko, 2018:80). In terms of participation in the political life, the highest percentage of voting was recorded in the 2018 elections in the Caucasus when 70% of the registered voters participated and mainly voted for Putin. When comparing to other Russian regions, it is obvious that citizens from the North Caucasus region, including Chechnya, Dagestan, and Kabardino- Balkaria represented a high percentage of voters. (Vereshchahin, 2018:4).

Back to the slogan "Russia for Russians", a 2012 popular consultation conducted by the Russian Academy for Science indicated that 10- 15 % of Russian citizens support the slogan, 30% believe that the Russian ethnicity enjoys higher rights and privileges than other ethnicities, a clear indicator that the Russian public discourse is negative towards the minorities in general and the North Caucasian one in particular. After the terrorist attack on Domodedovo airport in 2011, a poll conducted by Livada Center indicated that 24% of the participants prefer a ban on the entry and residency of people from North Caucasus into central parts of Russia. 19% of the participants voted for a total closure of borders with the North Caucasus (Murtada, 2017:131). The results of the toll show that the radical propaganda among nationalist Russians towards the North Caucasus people has become deeply rooted in the consciousness of Slavic Russians. The Russian decision-maker realized the need to reconsider the relationship with ethnic minorities after the growing negative perception. Certain ethnicities were included in the Russian political structure and became pillars for the stability of the regime like Chechens, others had their demographic historical role revived like Cossacks.

According to 2017 estimations, the Russian demographics showed an increase of the population age, one third of the population is over the age of 55 years, while 14 million, which is equivalent to 10% of the population are between the age of 15 to 24. With a percentage of 8%, Russia is one of the world's least growing countries in terms of population, which is a result of high mortality and low birth rates. Due to the lack of labor hands, this is directly affecting the economy and national security. Despite its need for human resources, Russian leadership, supported by the public opinion, sticks to a non-migration policy, except for people coming from Slavic background. (AlSheikh, 2018:90). Besides many ethnicities in the Federation, Circassians consider this a discriminatory policy. Circassians try to achieve the same privilege given to Slavic migrants. By allowing their brothers in the diaspora to return to Russia, Circassians can provide a solution to the demographic problem. On the other hand, the increase in the Muslim population in Russia led many scholars to expect that Muslims can be the majority in this Eurasian country. One-third of the total population is expected to be Russian Muslims by the middle of the current century and 50% by its end. (Russia, a major Islamic ascending power, 2013:23). All the previously mentioned polls and studies indicate that the ethnicities in the Russian Federation can be a serious factor that leads to the same consequences during the Soviet era. Clashes with ethnic minorities are highly expected in light of the increasing hatred and feeling of supremacy among the Slavic Russians. The notion that Slavs are controlling the strategic and sensitive components of the state-supported by the policies and practices

of the authorities will jeopardize the state entity. Among many official provocative to ethnic minorities was the recently approved controversial law of "Ethnic Languages, 2018".

In the modern state of Russia, the determinant of ethnic identity had always posed a challenge to the nationality concept and directly affected the concept of citizen. Always with a negative impact, the concept of nationality provoked ethnic minorities in the Tsarist and modern Russia.

According to Putin's perspective, this determinant is based on a unified identity that describes the Russians as an imperial (Tsarist) nation. Russians are one people that has common origins, and culture. Russian people speak the Russian language regardless of their national and ethnic origins: which form the basis of the common identity of the people. Everyone who holds Russian citizenship is considered part of the civic Russian nation, regardless of ethnicity or nationality (Gurbanov and Mammadov, 2012, 3).

The historic error of dissolving all the ethnicities made by the Soviet Union is repeated by the policies adopted by today's Russian leadership. The supremacy of the Slavic ethnicity is reflected in the Ethnic Languages law. On 10 April 2018, a few weeks after Putin winning the elections, the law was set before the Duma for approval, the draft stated that the Russian language, being the official state language, must be preserved to establish the national identity of the Federation. Therefore, teaching ethnic languages must not contradict the state's official language nor affect its status for that will affect the unity of the Russian Federation people. Learning the ethnic language has to be optional, opposite to the Russian language that must be taught in a way that can never be affected by languages. The draft law was opposed by some local parliaments in the ethnic republics. The head of Tatarstan parliament issued resolution 2255 on 25 April 2018 which included a memorandum to the Russian parliament (Duma) explaining the contradiction between the law of languages and the Russian constitution.(Official website of the Tatarstan parliament http: //www.gossov.tatarstan.tu). The Parliament of Kabardino-Balkaria issued similar resolution on 10 May 2018. (Offical website of the parliament of Kabardino Balkaria http://www.kbr.ru). Despite the two resolutions, draft law number 438863–7 on ethnic languages was approved on 25 July 2018 with a majority of 388 votes from a total of 450 votes in the Duma. (The official website of the Russian Parliament http://duma.gov.ru).

This shows the success of the Russian administration in linking the interests of the political elites in the ethnic republics including parliamentarians and local leaders with its interests. These elites are included in the United Russia party, which means a closer circle to the president himself. (PRINA, 2015:14). Besides the legislative institutes in the republics, civil society groups and associations representing ethnic and religious minorities joined the protest against the language law. One main association was the International Circassian Organization, which is one of few organizations registered officially that include in its membership other Circassian representing organizations from outside Russia. In its memorandum number 109 dated 11 April 2018, the organization addressed the president of the Russian Federation, head of Duma and Federal council to seek the respect of the minorities of the Russian Union about the

constitutionally guaranteed right of teaching and learning their ethnic languages and to take all measures to protect these languages, especially the Circassian language, all in line with the constitution and international norms and standards. (The website of the International Circassian Organization http://www.intercirass.org/). Several members of ethnic minorities consider this incident as a serious precedent and a clear breach of the constitution. Article 68 from the first section of the constitution states that:

1. The Russian language shall be a state language on the whole territory of the Russian Federation.

2. The Republics shall have the right to establish their state languages. In the bodies of state authority and local self-government, state institutions of the Republics shall be used together with the state language of the Russian Federation.

3. The Russian Federation shall guarantee to all of its peoples the right to preserve their native language and to create conditions for its study and development. (http://www.constitution.ru)

It is clear that ethnic languages are protected by the Russian constitution and are to be used in line with the Russian language. Moreover, efforts must be paid to develop and protect these languages. On the contrary, the law of languages, as per to members of the Russian ethnic groups, excludes them and eliminates the appropriate conditions to nourish and support these languages.

Article 69 states that: The Russian Federation shall guarantee the rights of the indigenous small peoples according to the universally recognized principles and norms of international law and international treaties and agreements of the Russian Federation. (http://www.constitution.ru). Accordingly, the main right which an ethnic minority is entitled to enjoy is the usage of its language, a right that is abolished by the new law.

The second article tackles human rights: Man, his rights and freedoms are the supreme value. The recognition, observance, and protection of the rights and freedoms of man and citizen shall be the obligation of the State.

And article 19, item 2 states that: The State shall guarantee the equality of rights and freedoms of man and citizen, regardless of sex, race, nationality, language, origin, property and official status, place of residence, religion, convictions, membership of public associations, and also of other circumstances. All forms of limitations of human rights on social, racial, national, linguistic, or religious grounds shall be banned.

The law of languages is a clear breach of equality right between all ethnic components of the Russian federation. The statues of privilege that was given to the Russian language indicated that the state is fully aware and agreeable

to the Slavic supremacy over the rest of the ethnicities. The concerns of members from the ethnic minorities have their justified reasons in light of the Russian constitution, but the Russian government insists that other languages are still open for learning, even in a selective manner, and the aforementioned law was approved by the majority of Duma and the Federal Council.

In the same context, other legislations are establishing more polarization and clashes between the minorities and the center. On the security level, the controversial ethnic group of Cossacks was given various privileges that provoked the indigenous people of North Caucasus. The historic role of Cossacks of oppression and settlement in other ethnic lands in Siberia and the Caucasus during the Tsarist era was revived. Started by decrees allowing holding personal weapons during Yeltsin's presidency, the Cossak roles were revived even more rapidly during Putin's presidency. Cossacks are the symbol of Putin's conservative ideology, in the year 2005, he signed a draft law that entitles the Cossak Organizations to nominate members to the Special Forces in the Russian military, and gave himself the right to assign their Cossak leaders. The Cossacks were given the right to establish their ethnic party in Rostov and received an allocation of 765 million Rubles (13.5 million $) from the state budget to support the so-called (Cossak Military Groups) until the year 2025. (Golts, 2018: 15). Members of these groups were shown on television wearing their national costumes and whipping protesters in Moscow on 5 May 2018. They were officially given the role of protecting the facilities used in World Cup 2018. (Arnold, 2018:15). When it comes to equality between the ethnic components, such policies represent a clear breach of the constitution, it enables, with official support, to establish ethnic-based parties and organizations with the right to carry arms. One main issue that can be highlighted is allowing Slavic and on some occasions Chechen forces to establish private security companies that can, in light of the amendment of law number 53, operate outside the Russian soil. That meant in other words that Russain mercenaries became officially legalised by the Russian law, and it paved the way for the Russian military to create partnerships with private security companies within a legal framework. This law became effective on 9 January 2017, since then several security companies have appeared on the scene. Moran Security Group RSB group, and the famous Wagner Group, which was created by the ex-militant Demitiry Utkin, a close figure to Putin, had all participated in operations in east Ukraine and Syria. These groups receive their training in the Caucasus region in Krasnodar Krai (Fidda, 2017:3) which is an additional provocative act to nationalistic sentiments of the indigenous people of that region.

These groups operate on Russian soil, and they were given the duty to protect several vital economic facilities. The question remains about the actual role of these groups that are controlled by members of Putin's close circle, and the possibility of engaging in any oppression acts that could be necessary to guarantee the sustainability of the current regime.

The future of ethnic and religious minorities in the Russian Federation:

In attempting to predict any roles of the ethnic and religious minorities in the political transformation in Russa, it was inevitable to study their current situation, nature of the historic relationship, and their role in the previous transformation. The future roles can be summarised in the following scenarios:

- Given the clear imbalance in distributing the privileges between minorities and the Russian majority on one hand and between different minorities on the other, some minorities will demand similar roles to those given to the Chechen minority and Cossak ethnic group. The extent and the scale of these demands will be determined by the success of a certain minority in convincing / pressing on the decision-maker to accept its inclusion in the current political elite. The following example of this scenario will be related to the Circassian ethnicity.
- The infringement of the constitutional rights of the minorities which created a platform of joint political interest will push them to establish an organization or a party, similar to the Democratic Conference of the Peoples of the Russian Federation, which can assist in facing their challenges. This can open wide doors of collaboration with the Russian opposition and replace the concept of patriotism with nationalism. The classic concept of a nation-state, which assumes that every state consist of a certain nationality, is becoming obsolete. The current reality is that the majority of the countries in the world consist of multiple nationalities/ ethnicities. In light of the integrative role of globalization, the risk of separation from an existing state has transformed into the shape of political, cultural, and linguistic demands. The modern state is becoming less ethnic and more pluralized, the concept of nationality has a new form, and dual identity became a more deepened concept. (Hilal, 2018:143).

Some minorities in the Russian Federation believe that political stability is a higher interest only in a frame of peaceful coexistence between multiple ethnicities. This can be fulfilled by building the foundations of a system that responds to the ethnic structure of the state and ensures a fair regional representation of these components. Also, these regional components must be involved in the central decision-making process, which can be attained by constitutional procedures that include the permission to use ethnic languages in managing their internal affairs and abolishing the hierarchal structure between the central and regional governments which can lead to a more developed economy. Ahmad, 2018:10).

The researcher believes that the political elites that represent the Circassian minority will seek a more effective role, similar to that given to other minorities like Chechens, Ingush, and even Cossacks. The Circassian minority has a group of potentials that qualifies it to convince the policymaker of including it within the circle of allies to the political elite. The demands will include the establishment of an armed group within the Russian military under the name "The Circassian Guards" similar to those of the Chechen and Cossacks. This group can guarantee political assets especially after the recognition made by

the Russian Academy for Science that Kabardians, Cherkess, Shapsough, and Adygeyans are all one nation called Circassians. This nation is spread in vast areas of North Caucasus in the Republic of Kabardnio- Balkaria, the Republic of Karachevo- Cherkess, the Republic of Adygheya, Stavropol Krai (Pyatigorsk and its surrounding), the Republic of North Ossetia (Mozdok region), Krasnodar Krai (Tuapse, Anapa, and Armavir). Moreover, Circassians inhabit the cities of Moscow and Saint Petersburg and according to official statistics they constitute about one million inside the Russian Federation, which makes it close to the Chechen ethnicity and more than the Ingush one. (Kasht, 2009:171). History can also play role in this matter, Circassians had traditional allied relations with the Russian Empire, the Russian military included Circassian military formations in addition to the Circassians' role in fending off the Nazi invasion. Circassian attitude towards the Nazi invasion is in line with the vision of the governing elite which attempts to consolidate all Russian spectra under their unified struggle during the Great War. During that war (The Nazi Invasion), Circassians, unlike other minorities including Chechens and Turkic nations of Karachays and Balkars, didn't collaborate with the invaders. This attitude is perceived as a persuasive argument for their demands. Furthermore, some radical groups may exploit the fragile situation in the Caucasus – especially in Kabardino- Balkaria where some extremist and armed groups are active- which adds to the necessity to create a Circassian armed group that can combat terrorism and protects the Russian soil. Such a group will not be of potential future risk due to the - known by Russian center – limited and week radical Islamic effect. Previous experience supports the idea that the Circassians can create well-controlled armed groups, in Abkhazia during the Georgian invasion in the nineties, Circassian volunteers supported the Abkhazian forces and enabled them to rout the Georgian forces. Eventually, none of the members of these forces turned into forming radical groups, on the contrary, these individuals returned peacefully to their homes before the eyes of the Russian security forces.

On another level, the Circassian genocide, which was committed by Tsarist Russia during the nineteenth century creates a genuine constitutional dilemma. After the clear indication of the genocide and the forced expulsion of the Circassians that was made by the former president Boris Yeltsin, parliaments of the Republic of Kabardino- Balkaria and the Republic of Adygheya officially recognized the genocide.

The decree 977 issued by the parliament of the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria on 7 February 1992 condemned the genocide of the Circassian people. A similar decree (number 64-1) was issued by the Republic of Adygheya on 29 April 1996, where both decrees demanded finding a mechanism to rectify the consequences of this atrocity, especially those related to the return of Circassians from the diaspora (Official website of the Republic of Adygeya, Http:\\www.adygheya.ru) based on an equal treatment to Slavic people who were given the same right. Circassians are

promoting themselves as a solution to the demographic challenge by giving this right to return their deported countrymen.

The constitutional dilemma results from the fact that these decrees were issued by parliaments within the Russian Federation. Any attempt to clarify the binding nature of these decrees will have unwanted consequences. Provided that these republics were not controlled by the Circassian elite, who avoid addressing this issue, raising this issue to the Higher Constitutional Court will be of high local and international embarrassment to the Russian state. Circassian demands can be channeled by Russian decision-makers by utilizing the aforementioned International Circassian Association mainly to emphasize implementing the federal ruling number 690 which was issued on 3 July 1998 and relates to the urgent governmental support to resettle Circassians from the former Yugoslavian district of Kosovo in the Republic of Adygheya. (Kesht, 2009: 180).

Circassian elite would use pressing elements to convince the Russian government of the need to engage in joint work. The recognition of the Circassian genocide by the Georgian government in 2011 (the official website of the Georgian parliament http://www.parliament.ge) and the establishment of "Free Caucasus" armed group in Ukraine and the call for people from the Caucasus to join this group (Larbi and others, 2017:22) can be utilized to convince Russian political leadership of the need for joint efforts to prevent Circassians from being drifted into anti-Russian policies which jeopardize the integrity of the Russian soil.

Circassians promote themselves as an ethnic minority with a strong alliance with the governing political elite. They do not have any ambitions to settle their demands except within the Russian federation unlike other ethnic groups with external ethnic affiliations like the Tatars, Balkars, and Karachays which have warm ties with ethnic brothers in the Republic of Turkey. Circassians do not have any affiliation with external organizations, which are classified as terrorist groups, like the "Grey Wolves" organization that contains Toranic members from Turkish, Balkars, and Karachay who fought against the Russian army in the first and second wars of Chechnya. (Fawwaz, 2015:87).

Circassians have a demand for integrating their lands into one entity based on their constitutional rights which are supported by international laws and treaties that Russia is a signatory to. These lands were previously craved out from the historical Circassian lands and annexed to other Krais and republics. (These lands include Mozdok, Pyatigorsk, Anapa, and Tuapse.).

Previous attempts to retrieve these lands were strongly made during the nineties by the head of the Circassian political elite Yuri Kalmykov, who died in mysterious circumstances. Kalmykovs death was described by some sources as an assassination taken by the Russian authorities that aimed to abort his nationalistic scheme. Kalmykov had earlier resigned from his position

as Minister of Justice during Yeltsin's presidency, in a reaction against the Russian military 82intervention in Chechnya. (Idar, 2007: 03)

The talk about these demands restarted when the presidential envoy to North Caucasus region Vladimir Ustinov stated in 2009 that Circassian nationalists are ffuelling the dispute and aiming to establish a new Federal project that will dismember the region of South Russia in case Circassian territories were unified. (Dzutsati, 2015:4).

There are many indicators that the Russian leadership imposes certain roles to each minority according to what is deemed appropriate for supporting the continuum of its power. (Turmiols in North Caucasus, Free Europe Radio: 2018). The clashes between Circassians and Balqars in Kabrdino- Balkaria on 18 September 2018 resulted in 16 injuries among the Russian security forces and the arrest of 120 protesters. The clashes erupted after Balkars from neighbouring villages intercepted marching Circassians who were heading to mount Kanjal for celebrating the anniversary of Circassian – Tatar battle of Kanjal.

Other clashes erupted in the Republic of Ingushetia between locals and the Russian security forces at the Ingushetian capital Magas on 25 September 2018. Ingushetians were protesting against the annexation of their lands to the neighbouring Chechen Republic.

The Circassian model could likely repeat itself among other ethnic groups. In light of the policies of the Russian leadership, the competition between the different ethnic groups has turned into a race for proving loyalty. The governing political elite remains able to link the interests of the ethnic and religious elites to its interests. The role of the minorities will remain connected to achieving the interests of the Russian elite, controlled by it, and exploited whenever and however deemed necessary to protect this elite.

However, this relationship between ethnic and Russian elites may change. Reactions toward the language law and the emergence of the Democratic Conference of the People of the Russian Federation, a non-official organization until 2008, are indicators of possible transfer in the political scene. The core of this organization was created after a meeting held in Moscow on 21 May 2018. 12 representatives from Russian republics and regions attended the meeting which aimed principally to defend the constitutional rights of ethnicities regarding their languages. Until this moment, the organization remains non-political. (Democratic Conference of the People of the Russian Federation Http:\\www.kavkazr/com).

These new conditions indicate that some ethnic elites tend to establish a political body in the shape of a party or an organization that can express the interests of the minorities and defends their constitutional rights. This trend may have been affected by the Peoples Democratic Party in Turkey, which succeeded in displaying itself as a party that represents all minorities including Kurds, Armenians, and Kipchaks within the Turkish parties law and without any racial or ethnic biases. This party which had relatively high success in the 2015 elections (GLOBE, 2015:5) remains far from being adopted in the Russian political system. What may capture the attention is the success in finding a consensus formula that is accepted by different ethnicities in light of the

current fragmentation and disagreement (which is never a result of the ethnic diversity).
The distribution of religious minorities in the Russian federation is mainly focused on the Volga basin, Urals, and North Caucasus. These minorities are unable to create a religious leadership that can manage its affairs, Tatar Imams are not accepted in the North Caucasus and vice versa. Cooperation is generally initiated to undertake the chores given by the civilian authority. Religious solidary is very limited, which was demonstrated during the two Chechen wars. The spiritual structure lacks coordination, leaderships competes within themselves to control the parish and gain the right to represent Muslims before the central authority. (Malashinko, 2018:19). Being known by the political leadership, this status of repulsion and rivalry is exploited to guarantee full control under the same political approach that is used in dealing with the Circassian matter.
Back to the Democratic Conference of the People of the Russian Federation, which captured the interest of the liberal Yabluko party, mainly for its call to dedicate federation in the Russian political system. Maxim Chevshinko, the former head of the Presidential Committee for Human Rights attended several meetings held by the conference in an indication of adopting a new political thought by the opposition of unity and collaboration between all its bodies in the Russian Federation. (The objective of the Democratic Conference of the People of the Russian Federation, Free Europe Radio,2018).

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union until the first president of the Russian Federation, the important role of ethnic and religious minorities can be observed in supporting presidents and representatives of the regions and republics. Providing these leaderships with wide responsibilities and free decision making nurtured separate movements like the Chechen matter. This matter played a major role in the Russian political transformation, it was the main key for President Putin to gain publicity and unify the Russian community. The matter later became the main pillar in political stability after being a worrying element in domestic Russian politics.
Putin's success in oppressing the powers of the heads of regions and republics controlled the status of breakdown and anarchism that had prevailed. By drifting towards the national thoughts controlling system of Tsarist Russia in taking decisions that undermined the rights of ethnic minorities, in addition to his approach in exploiting some minorities in oppressing others, Putin had created a status of competition between the elites of ethnic and religious minorities. Such competition was tailored into a race for wining loyalty to Putin's regime. All these policies recall the experience of the Soviet Union in failing to contain ethnic minorities. It is imperative to say that social fusion policy proved its failure in light of the previous Soviet experience of 70 years of obliterating cultural and linguistic features. This practice provoked researchers and policymakers to handle the issue of balancing between cultural and social pluralism from one side and respecting it from the other. The new resulting institutional formula is known as "Consensus democracy"(Hilal, 2018: 132).

Summary of Chapter 5

This chapter focused on the mutual influence between the political elites that represent the minorities and the current Russian leadership. To achieve that, the focus was made on the political transformations that started with the formulation of the Russian modern state, then tackling the current situation of the ethnic and religious minority, in an attempt to explore their future role within the political system. A focus was made on the role of the ethnic and religious minorities in shaping the current political situation, the means and tactics followed by these minorities, and the extent of influence they create over the options taken by the Russian state. The light was shed on the expected role of the minorities in case formulas of alliance policies were developed, within the legal context of the Russian state, and what may result from such formulas.

Conclusion

This study aimed to clarify a group of objectives; a) the role of minorities in the political system based on their current situation, potentials, and level of influence, b) exploring the future role that these minorities are capable to achieve (being the largest minority, Muslims were selected as a model for study), and c) the possibility of developing a coalition or a party that can assist in serving the minorities interests, protect their rights and guarantees an effective inclusion in the Russian political life.

The study focused on the development of the Russian political system starting from the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 until Mr. Vladimir Putin assumed power in 2000. Furthermore, the nature of powers that influence the internal environment and institutional structure were studied.

The study problem can be summarized as follows:

- The previous, current, and future shape of roles taken by ethnic and religious minorities.
- Minorities' ability to maintain their political assets and to have political influence during the transformation especially in light of the gradual shift of the political system into central control represented by the United Russia party.

The following questions resulted from the theoretical framework of the study:

- What is the role of the ethnic and religious minorities in the political transformation? Would the Russian political structure enable broader and more effective participation of the minorities? Is there any possibility to establish a political alliance between different minorities that can be achieved in a form of a political party able to participate in political life and to maintain the interests of minorities? What is the multi-ethnic and religious effect on the stability of the Russian political system?
- How did the political leadership, represented by Putin, succeed in restructuring the state? What are the merits of the current leadership, that Yeltsin lacked, and enabled it to rebuild an almost devastated

state? To what extent is the political elite influencing transformation in Russia?

The study found its results after answering the previous questions while following the System approach by Gabriel Almond and the descriptive-analytical approach. The two approaches were utilized in analyzing the topic of the study (during the period 2000-2017) based on David Easton's theory of Political system analysis and the theory of elite, the following are the answers to the study's questions:

1. The Russian Federation is unique in its national multiplicity, ethnic, and religious (and on some occasions the combination of both) minorities existed throughout the state's history. This huge ethnic and religious diversity always influenced and was affected by the political system. Minorities participated in the transformations witnessed in the Russian Federation in various ways, some of which succeeded in reaching a harmonic nature of its relationship with the regime (the Republic of Tatarstan), others were contained using oppression and violence (the Republic of Chechnya), while the rest still have a continuing stuck issues like the Circassian matter.
2. The interests of the minorities, both ethnic and religious, remain scattered and even conflicting which dictates that the Russian state is forced to deal with an individualized approach when dealing with their demands. This situation led the Russian governing elite to establish a clear pattern of discrimination in responding to minorities' demands. The result was a competitive relationship between minority elites. This state of competition could easily turn into a unified political stance, close to the central power, and demanding additional interests.
3. The role of minorities in the political system varies between one and another, some had maintained an effective and strong role like the Chechen ethnic minority, while others have a retreat in their role since the nineties like the Tatar and Circassian minorities. The armed ethnic groups, Chechen and Cossacks, in the Russian army guarantees a future role in forming the Russian future.
4. History has proven that the ruling elite is the most appropriate way of ruling in the Russian state. Regardless of the political transformations, the elite had always monopolized power and directed the Russian public according to the slogan "Russia knows its path".
5. The Russian Federation, led by Vladimir Putin, successfully avoided transforming into a failed state. Elite had a main role in the rebuilding process, with radical transformations applied to the structure of state institutes, they were able to maintain their political, security, and social roles in an effective, legitimate, and publicly accepted way. In other words, Russia built its system of authority that monopolizes the legitimate use of materialistic power.
6. The rise of Putin's political power, its success in obtaining international support for its policies depended on Putin's success in administrating the Chechen matter, Russia's most prominent challenge in the modern political transformation. This illustrates the role of ethnic and religious

minorities, which can affect the stability of Russia in either positive or negative ways. The success of containing minorities came from oppressing nationalistic leaders in the republics and regions and building new alliances with new representatives from minorities.

7. The political elite is influencing the future of the Russian Federation, in some instances, it even forms that future. This is proof that "Guided Democracy" and "Single leader", Vladimir Putin in the Russian case, are the ongoing models in modern Russia. Putin takes all the decisions depending on the "Soft Tyranny" principle.

Based on the results obtained through questions and answers on the studies objectives and problem, this study recommends:

1. In light of the national diversity in the Russian Federation, it is imperative to follow policies that support such diversity and avoid the currently used containment policy. It is important to revise the lessons learned from the unsuccessful Soviet experience and refer to the constitution that emphasizes the respect of all elements of the Russian public. Minorities from their side have to reinforce their roles in the political system, retrieve their historic role in building modern Russia, and seek a political representation that is mindful of its demands and interests. This model can also be implemented in the Arab world to limit the separation trend among minorities.
2. Dissolve all ethnic armed groups like the Chechen elite force and Cossak militias, and limit the security responsibility to one united force that includes members from all Russian backgrounds like "The National Guards", or allowing other minorities, like the Circassians, to establish similar forces within the Russian army.
3. The Russian democracy transfer proves that each state has to tailor its pattern of democracy that responds to its needs. This can be adopted in the Arab World, namely states that were affected by the (Arab Spring), as the political transformation will not progress the communities unless they were the results of their historic, cultural and social components.
4. The need to create a mutual understanding between elites from ethnic minorities that can represent their interests and protect their constitutional rights in light of international laws and agreements that the Russian state abides by. Moreover, it is important to expand the domain of the "Democratic Conference of the Peoples of the Russian Federation" and its alliance with the Russian opposition in terms of establishing a civil state that guarantees the rights of its members within the system of a Federal state.
5. The Russian political leadership must stop favoring policy between minorities. It must end the status of the loyalty race and respect all components of the state following its constitution and responding to the international norms and standards.
6. Revising the laws that breach the rights of minorities like the language law. Also, revising the constitutional amendments that limited the authorities of heads of ethnic republics and regions which contradict the federal agreements between these republics and the Russian

center during the nineties, where the nature of the relationship with the center was identified clearly. (The constitution of the Republic of Adygeya).

7. Founding a correct constitutional treatment to the demands of ethnic minorities like the decree made by the republic of Kabardino- Balkaria that relates to the Circassians right to return to their ancestral lands in North Caucasus, recognizing the Circassian genocide, and activating the role of the Higher Constitutional Court about draft laws that breach the rights of ethnic minorities.
8. Emphasis to be made by the political elites of the ethnic and religious minorities that their demands are to be met only within the frame of the Russian Federation and prevent the exploitation by external agendas. The Russian political leadership must deal with the demands in a way that eliminates the possibility that these minorities can seek external support to defend their rights.

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